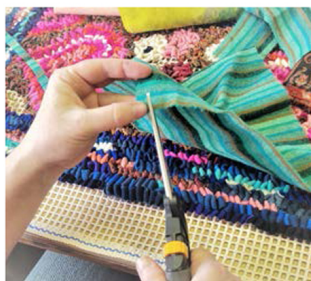
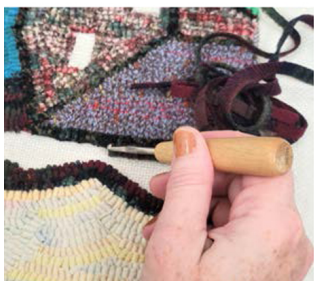
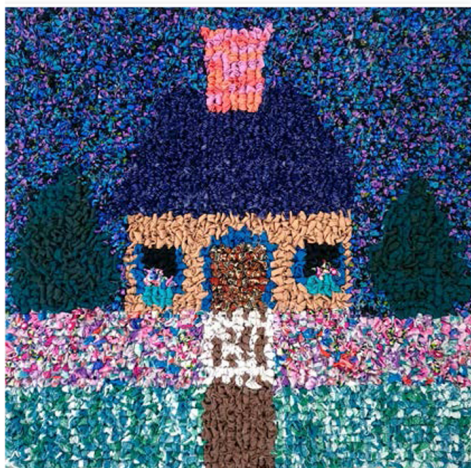

Easy, Beautiful Handmade Rag Rugs

12 Step-By-Step Techniques with Patterns and Projects,
Including Latch Hook, Braiding, and Punch Needle



Deana David

Easy, Beautiful Handmade

Rag Rugs



Easy, Beautiful Handmade Rag Rugs

12 Step-By-Step Techniques with Patterns and Projects,
Including **Latch Hook**, **Braiding**, and **Punch Needle**



Deana David

Easy, Beautiful Handmade Rag Rugs

Landauer Publishing, www.landauerpub.com, is an imprint of
Fox Chapel Publishing Company, Inc.

Copyright © 2023 by Deana David and Fox Chapel Publishing Company, Inc.,
903 Square Street, Mount Joy, PA 17552.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior written permission of Fox Chapel Publishing, except for the inclusion of brief quotations in an acknowledged review and the enlargement of the template patterns in this book for personal use only. The patterns themselves, however, are not to be duplicated for resale or distribution under any circumstances. Any such copying is a violation of copyright law.

Project Team

Managing Editor: Gretchen Bacon

Acquisitions Editor: Shelley Carr

Editor: Sherry Vitolo

Designer: Mary Ann Kahn

Proofreader and Indexer: Jean Bissell

Unless otherwise noted, all photography by Deana David.

All illustrations by Jessica David.

The following images are from Shutterstock.com: tie-dye pattern throughout: Vaani and Jyoti; dotted pattern throughout: je48design; 1 background: seksan wangkeeree; 3 background: turkkub; 37 burlap: Tamara Kulikova; 37 rug mesh backing: nissia; 42 bottom left: Marietjie; 42 top right: Oksana Bessonova; 42 bottom right: FocusStocker; 43 top left: Mega Pixel; 43 center left: koosen; 43 bottom left: PRESSLAB; 44 tools top left: kenary820; 44 tools bottom left: krolya25; 44 tools top right: New Africa; 44 tools bottom right: Linda Bestwick; 45 top left: Ermak Oksana; 45 center left: Elena Elisseeva; 45 bottom left: Andrii A; 45 top right: sevenke; 45 center right: Bernd Schmidt; 45 bottom right: Vladimir Zhupanenko; 46: Anna Kepa; 60: val lawless; 61 top: VipadaLoveYou

Print ISBN 978-1-63981-06-2

eISBN 978-1-63741-121-6

Library of Congress Control Number: 2023934084

We are always looking for talented authors. To submit an idea, please send a brief

inquiry to acquisitions@foxchapelpublishing.com.

Note to Professional Copy Services:

The publisher grants you permission to make up to six copies of any quilt patterns in this book for any customer who purchased this book and states the copies are for personal use.

This book has been published with the intent to provide accurate and authoritative information in regard to the subject matter within. While every precaution has been taken in the preparation of this book, the author and publisher expressly disclaim any responsibility for any errors, omissions, or adverse effects arising from the use or application of the information contained herein.

For a printable PDF of the patterns used in this book, please contact Fox Chapel Publishing at customerservice@foxchapelpublishing.com, with **9781639810062** **Easy, Beautiful Handmade Rag Rugs** in the subject line.

Contents

INTRODUCTION

GALLERY

MATERIALS

- Ready-Made Materials
- Recycled Materials
- Nontraditional Materials
- Rug Backing Materials

TOOLS

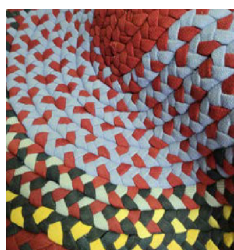
- Specialized Rug-Making Tools
- General Tools
- Pattern Transfer Tools
- Dyeing Tools

DESIGNING, TRANSFERRING, AND SIZING

- Using Commercial Patterns
- Creating Original Patterns
- Transferring Your Pattern
- Sizing and Shaping Your Rugs

COLOR PLANNING AND DYEING

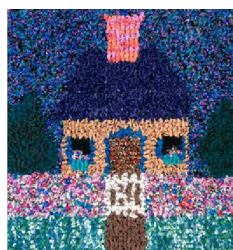
- The Color Wheel and Color Theory
- Creating Your Own Colors



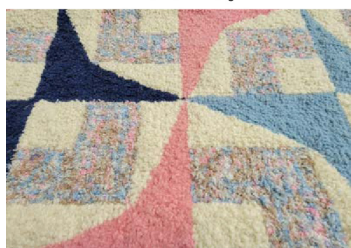
The Braided Rug



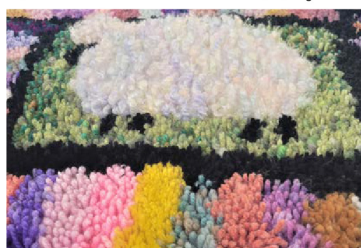
Miniature Punch Needle



The Locker Hooked Rug



The Traditional Hooked Rug



The Latch Hook Rug

TECHNIQUES AND PROJECTS

The Amish Toothbrush Rug

Practice Project: The Painted Desert

The Braided Rug

Practice Project: Sunrise Swirl

The Crocheted Rug

Practice Project: Ghosts of Summers Past

The Traditional Hooked Rug

Practice Project: View from Digby

The Proddy Rug

Practice Project: Mom's Flowers, Dad's Weeds

The Latch Hook Rug

Practice Project: Lamb's Tongue Sampler

The Looped Latch Rug

Practice Project: Valentine Bouquet

The Locker Hooked Rug

Practice Project: Matchbox Mansion

Penny Rugs

Practice Project: Civil War Pennies

The Quillie Rug

Practice Project: Magdalena's Lollipop Tree

Traditional Punch Needle

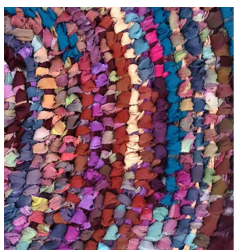
Practice Project: Teacup Mansion

Miniature Punch Needle

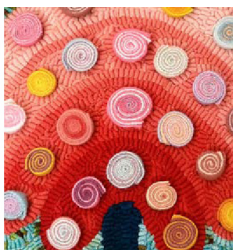
Practice Project: The Trail of the Patchwork Ponies

Patterns

About the Author



The Amish Toothbrush Rug



The Quillie Rug



Penny Rugs



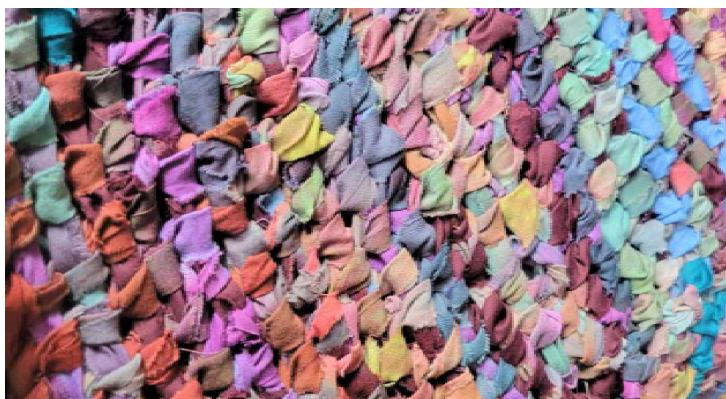
The Crocheted Rug



The Proddy Rug

Introduction

In this book, I hope to demystify rag rug making and take you through centuries of rug varieties, teaching you 12 distinct techniques through straightforward, easy-to-follow instructions. We'll look at sewn rugs like penny and lamb's tongue rugs to hooked rugs like latch hook and looped latch rugs, and everything in between. At the beginning of every technique, I'll tell you a bit about the history and provide some tips and tricks to get you going. My sister, Jessica, has provided illuminating technical drawings that enlarge the fiddly parts of each process to show you the smallest moments with big, bold clarity. Finally, I'll share an example project you can use to familiarize yourself with the process.



When I first took up rug making, I was a new parent and expat living in Amsterdam, and I was very homesick. I read Nathaniel Hawthorne and Louisa May Alcott and begged my mom to send my favorite American treats. I riffled through Revolutionary War history books and painted witches on broomsticks and cornucopias spilling out Concord grapes and pumpkins. I tried to make my foreign world cozier by reconnecting with the traditional motifs of our national identity. I began to think about crafts that felt uniquely North American, and I kept stumbling upon pretty New England picture rugs—decorative silhouettes of Scottish Terriers, tiny Cape Cod cottages sitting beside sandy shores, baskets of carnations and fat roses, etc. I

decided to try my hand at the art with a maple leaf rug-making kit.

Imagine finding a craft that turns your rags into rainbows and your thoughts into an ever-spinning windmill of colors and shapes. Imagine giving your castaway clothing new life and turning that attic heap into a harvest of bright and beautiful rugs and hangings! This is the spirit behind rag rug making!

I got into rug making with a vengeance and loved that I'd finally found a use for the sentimental scraps I'd been holding onto. The onesies my kids had outgrown, my cat's old bed, beloved wool coats damaged by moths—I cut them all into strips and used them to create memory-filled art. My journey finally led me to build my own business, Ribbon Candy Hooking. Nowadays, I record how-to videos and run a live show about rug making. I draw patterns, fill orders, dye wool, and teach (my favorite part).



The popularity of thrift crafts, including rag rug making, has always ebbed and flowed with the social and economic climate. After the American Industrial Revolution, people wanted to buy finished goods—it was a status symbol to have a manufactured rug in every room. After the Great Depression, rag rugs came back into vogue out of necessity. The economy bounced back after World War II and people started spending again, frequenting big department stores with panoramic display windows. This pendulum just keeps on swinging year after year. Right now, handicrafts are popular, and people are more and more interested in connecting with this history.

It's a long-standing joke in the rag rug world that once you get started, you become a covetous magpie. You'll see ideal rugmaking materials everywhere you look—from your friend's plaid holiday skirt

to your dad's favorite sweater. Your boss's dress pants might be the exact shade of cornflower blue you've been looking for to brighten up your current project, and the man who works the corner newsstand might have a jacket that is the perfect color for a winter sunset scene! This hobby can truly become an obsessive, lifelong treasure hunt.

Rug making is a historic craft experiencing a modern Renaissance—people everywhere are embracing arts of thriftiness. Make do or mend! Recycle and repurpose! Think green! We're collectively moving away from consumerism—back in time to when we used our hands to create beauty and function from spare scraps.

Here is your chance. Jump right in and remember, people used to create these rugs using only bent nails, broken clothespins, and bits of antler. If you encounter any frustrations, remind yourself of that. This is only the beginning, and I can't wait to see where your rug-making journey takes you!

Deana David



Gallery

Rag rug techniques developed out of thrift and the need to use whatever the makers had on hand, so it makes sense that it grew into a varied art form with seemingly endless creative possibilities. Even within each technique, the artists are constantly innovating or finding new ways to pay homage to classic designs. The following gallery showcases traditional pieces to modern works, and everything in between. Find inspiration in the artists' unique takes on these beloved classic techniques.

Jenni Stuart-Anderson

Jenni's Rag Rugs

Website: jenniragrugs.com

Herefordshire, UK

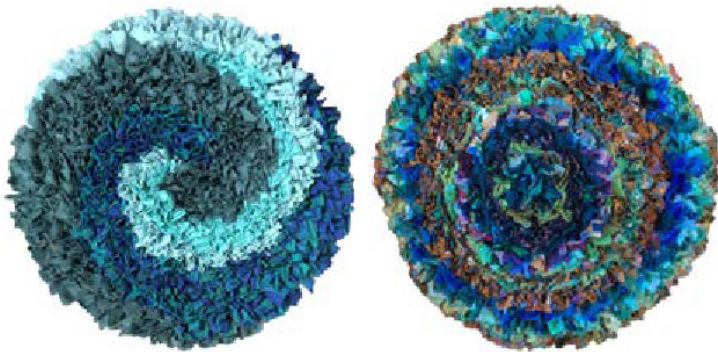
A blacksmith's daughter who made rugs for over 50 years showed me two traditional techniques, which I have shared for years with many people. I enjoy helping others explore their creativity and keeping the craft alive. I mainly use propping (proddy), hooking, and plaiting (braiding), but tried more techniques in my third book.



RED FLOWERS This hooked rag rug was made from strips of woolen blankets and jumpers (sweaters).

Dimensions: 26¾" × 20" (68 × 51cm)

Technique: Traditional hooked rug



PROGGED SEAT MAT SET This set of progged (proddy) seat mats was made using recycled cottons on a hessian (burlap) backing from two of my kits.

Dimensions: 15⅝" (39cm) diameter each

Technique: Proddy rug



OVAL PROGGED RUG This oval progged (proddy) rug was made from one of my kits and uses recycled cottons on a hessian (burlap) backing.

Dimensions: 27½" × 21¼" (70 × 54cm)

Technique: Proddy rug

Zak Foster

Zak Foster Quilts

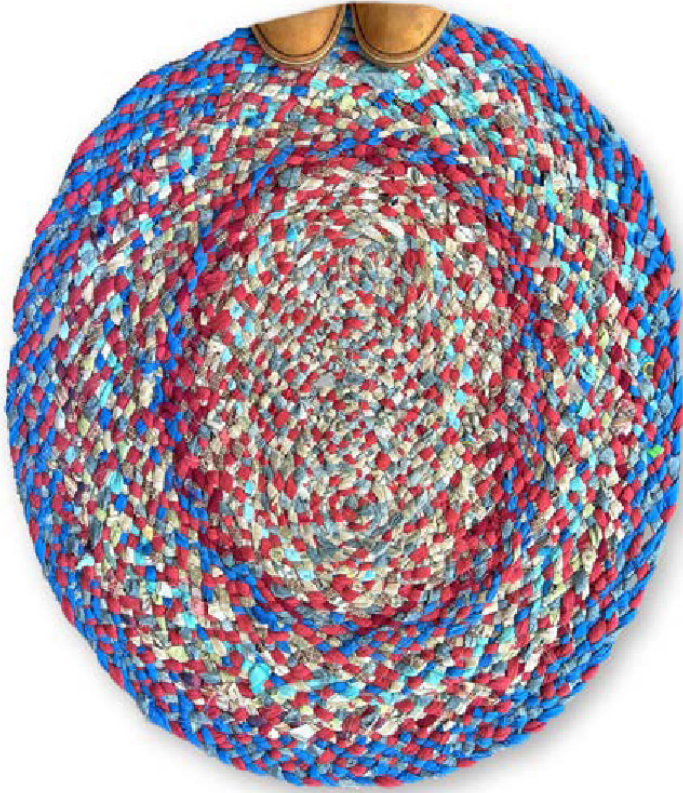
Website: zakfoster.com

Instagram: [@zakfoster.quilts](https://www.instagram.com/zakfoster.quilts)

New York, USA

Raised in rural North Carolina and now living in Brooklyn, New York, Zak is a community-taught artist whose work draws on Southern textile traditions and repurposed fabrics. He practices an approach to design that is intuitive and improvisational. He is especially drawn to preserving the stories of quilts and specializes in memory quilts and burial quilts. His work has been featured on the red carpet of the Met Gala, in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and in various magazines, websites, and galleries. His QUILTY NOOK community connects and inspires quilters and makers all over the world.





RAG RUG I made this improv rag rug as a way of keeping my feet warm on the cold tile floor and using up some of my fabric scraps from quilt-making. Especially helpful were the long strips cut off from the backing after quilting.

Dimensions: 24" × 36" (61 × 91cm)

Technique: Braided rug

Karina Carter-Krafft

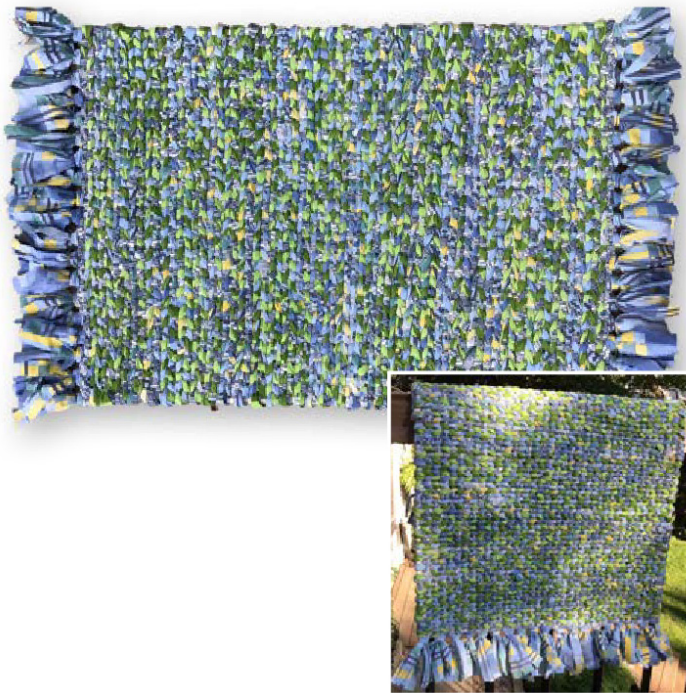
Rag Rugs by Karina

Facebook: [ragrugsbykarina](#)

Instagram: [@ragrugsbykarina](#)

Nova Scotia, Canada

Karina Carter-Krafft is a self-taught rug weaver, learning to twine on a loom hand built by her husband. This method of weaving, called twining, uses recycled textiles, such as bed linens, to create durable floor rugs and other home items. Karina teaches workshops in her home studio in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia.



SUMMERTIME I made this rag rug on a twining loom from vintage bed sheets. Twined rugs are two wefts wrapped around one warp, making them heavy and durable.

Dimensions: 21" × 34" (53 × 86cm)

Technique: Woven rug (Twining, similar to Braided rug)

Sally Hands

Website: sallyhands.co.uk

Instagram: @sallyhands

Wales, UK

I make sustainable textiles, so my hooked rugs are literally made with “rags.” I’m always scrounging old sweaters and blankets from friends! Old wool is really hard to source, but I won’t use new wool.



24-INCH PIZZA! I hook rag rugs in the evenings after work. I don’t use a frame but just hook in my lap. I always use recycled fabrics, usually wool or sometimes brightly colored t-shirts, which I mostly scrounge from friends or local thrift shops.

Dimensions: 24" (61cm) diameter

Technique: Traditional hooked rug

Kira Mead

The Accidental Rugmaker

Website: accidentalrugmaker.wordpress.com

Albany, Australia

Kira is known for working her quillie on a much larger scale. She sometimes uses upcycled wool blankets the way they are, but otherwise she dyes them with food coloring to achieve the color she's looking for.



COSMIC PEACOCK The neon colors that are achieved in this piece are a wonder to behold. The piece also has fairy lights inserted to make the quillies, quite literally, shine.

Dimensions: 37 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (96cm) diameter

Technique: Quillie rug

Kirsten Gay

S. Kirsten Gay

Vermont, USA

Kirsten is inspired by pets, particularly cats, and she captures their unique mannerisms and moods like no one else. There have been animal portraitists since the beginning of paint, but it takes real inspiration to infuse an animal design with true personality and character.



DREAMING IN THE GARDEN All cat lovers have seen this expression on the family cat, but we never see these fleeting moments and expressions in art. If you are a cat lover, you recognize this delicious stretch that is universal and universally adorable among felines.

Dimensions: 11" × 11" (28 × 28cm)

Technique: Traditional hooked rug



HOME IS MY CREATURES Tucked safely inside are Bebop the cat, Kirsten's husband, herself, her mom, and Joonbug the cat. This was the first time she'd hooked people or employed this style or such a fanciful palette. She had to rehook the cats several times and fool around with skin tones, which are always tricky. She admits her shading caused her mom to have an accidental beard for a while and abandoned the shading approach.

Dimensions: 10" × 16¼" (25.4 × 41.3cm)

Technique: Traditional hooked rug

Rebecca Holley

Website: rebeccaholleyartworks.co.uk

Instagram: @rebeccaholleyartworks

Facebook: rebeccaholleyartworks

Devon, UK

This body of work is inspired by Dartmoor, Devon, UK. It is a very barren open moorland with rocky tor outcrops, signs of ancient settlements, and prehistoric stone circles and avenues. I spend time in the landscape taking photographs, drawing, and looking at maps; I then turn them into designs ready to hook.



NYMET WEST *Nymet* is an old Anglo Saxon place name particular to Devon, UK, meaning “open sacred site, usually on a hilltop.” All my work originates from my own sketches and designs, and each piece is hand-hooked through burlap using 100% reclaimed fabrics—from clothing to curtains, and upholstery material to fabric scraps.

Dimensions: 25" × 25" (64 × 64cm)

Technique: Traditional hooked rug



NYMET EAST This piece is a diptych, meaning it's split across two parts. I have created this piece as one long piece, but there is something special about breaking apart the abstract shapes and lines.

Dimensions: 25" × 25" (64 × 64cm)

Technique: Traditional hooked rug

Sharon Marshall

Raggedy Nannie

Instagram: @raggedy_nannie

Facebook: raggedynanniecornwall

Cornwall, UK

These rugs are as far away from “throwaway” as it’s possible to get and a perfect example of creativity from scraps! All fabrics used are repurposed, so colors and sizes of individual rugs vary hugely on what I find. This combines my passion for sourcing unwanted clothing and fabrics with my love for designing, making, and creating rugs that offer quality, outstanding value and a one-off charm that’s rare in today’s mass-produced world.



ROCKPOOL DREAMS I live by the beach, and my rag rugs are often inspired by the calming blues of a shimmering sea, the vibrancy of a golden sunset, and the natural world. All are made with love, a whole lot of patience, and a very large crochet hook!

Dimensions: 33½" (85cm) diameter

Technique: Crocheted rug



SUMMER SUNSET I made this lovely crocheted rag rug from a combination of repurposed cotton duvet covers and sheeting in shades of red and orange with hints of turquoise blue. A handstitched edging highlights the original design.

Dimensions: 33½" (85cm) diameter

Technique: Crocheted rug

Lu Mason

Made by Lu

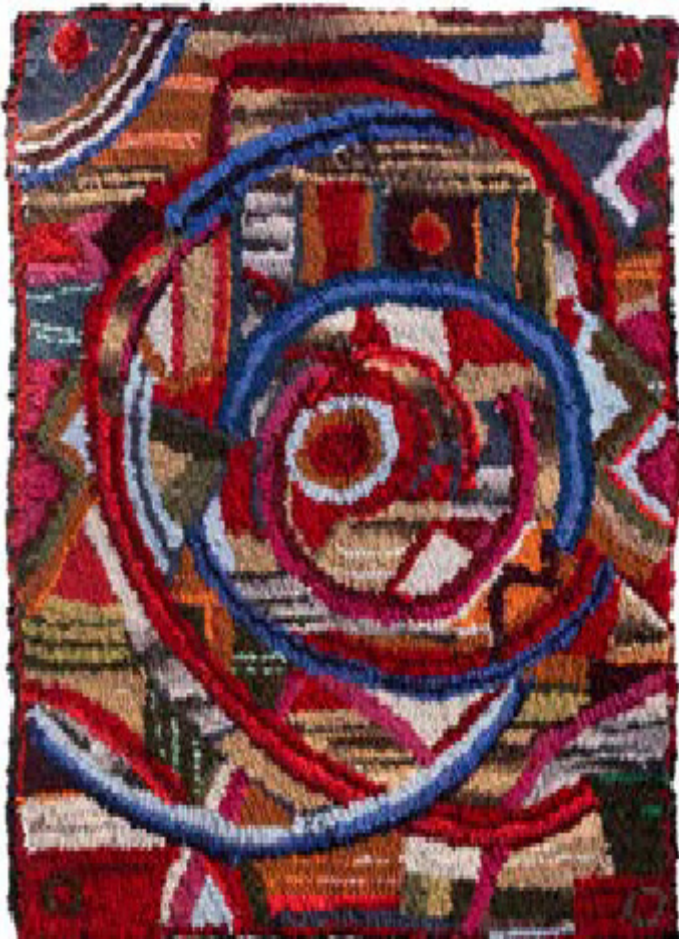
Website: madebylumason.weebly.com

Instagram: @lumasonbaker

York, UK

I try to divide my time between doing commissions and coming up with new ideas. I use recycled clothes in a traditional way, and I often think about how much color is available now compared to when rag rugs were made in the “old days,” when colors were quite dark and bright shades were hard to find. I also have started using cashmere surplus, which would be thrown out by the cashmere mills if not used by textile makers.

I am very influenced by my great uncle, who made over 150 beautiful rag rugs. I’m also very influenced by the fact that I live in the North of England, where making rag rugs was not only part of the tradition, but also was necessary to make warm floor coverings.



ABSTRACT RUG This rug was inspired by the paintings of Francis Davison, a British painter and collage-maker from the 1950s.

Dimensions: 39 $\frac{3}{8}$ " \times 29 $\frac{1}{2}$ " (100 \times 75cm)

Technique: Traditional hooked rug



ANGEL For this, I was inspired by American weathervanes. I made it in time to hang in the window of my workshop over Christmas.

Dimensions: 51¼" × 35½" (130 × 90cm)

Technique: Traditional hooked rug



YELLOW BIRD My response to Russia invading Ukraine. It is an interpretation of the paintings of Ukrainian artist Maria Prymachenko. Lots of her paintings were in a museum just outside Kiev; the museum was hit by a bomb in the early days of the conflict, but a local resident ran in and saved as many of them as he could.

Dimensions: 47 $\frac{1}{4}$ " \times 19 $\frac{3}{4}$ " (120 \times 50cm)

Technique: Traditional hooked rug

Margaret Arraj

Mill River Rugs

Massachusetts, USA

Margaret has a large body of exciting work, representing many periods and places. She pulls from infinite sources as inspiration, like an encyclopedia of world culture, and can easily translate and celebrate so much diversity and beauty in her pieces.



TURKISH PRAYER RUG A rug based on an old Turkish design, demonstrating just how delicate this technique can be.

Dimensions: 29½" × 42" (75 × 106.7cm)

Technique: Traditional hooked rug



TABRIZ TREE This piece is based on a Tabriz Oriental rug design. Traditional designs are still just as beautiful today.

Dimensions: 19" × 30" (48 × 76cm)

Technique: Traditional hooked rug

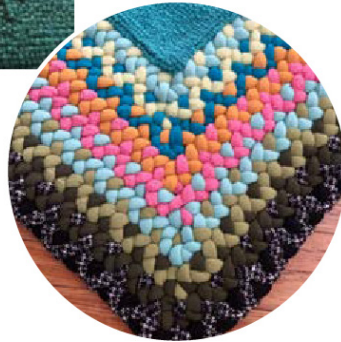
Marjorie Corrow

Braiders Circle Rugs

Etsy: BraidersCircle

New York, USA

Marjorie is a master of combining hooking and braiding, adding bands of thoughtful color, and creating works of rugging art in which the frame is as spectacular as the centerpiece. Sometimes people don't know what to do with small, hooked pieces. Marjorie turns them into large color kaleidoscopes with rows and rows of time-intensive braiding.



THE IMPORTANCE OF BEES In this striking example, Marjorie uses a commercially made pillow as the center. What a lot of fun choosing the colors to create the border.

Dimensions: Approx. 20" x 20" (50.8 x 50.8cm)

Techniques: Braided rug

Laurine Rohl

Green at Heart Rugs

Website: greenatheartrugs.com

New Jersey, USA

Laurine finishes her rugs by zigzagging on her commercial machine. Sewing through layers of braiding—even if it's T-shirt material—is too much for most modern sewing machines. Her pieces are a fantastic example of the new Braided Rug: colorful, energized, and fun.



SUN RUG The brights and neons on this rug are quite eye-catching; they feel like that scene in *The Wizard of Oz* when the technicolor begins.

Dimensions: 48" (122cm) diameter

Technique: Braided rug



PASTEL AND SPRING GREEN RUG Braiding rugs from T-shirts is not something found in books or your local craft store. I had to work through problems and solve them and had to teach myself to dye fabric. By making bright and colorful rugs, I learn something new every day.

Dimensions: 48" (122cm) diameter

Technique: Braided rug

Karen Tiede

Website: RugsFromRags.com

North Carolina, USA

Karen Tiede is an artist who has worked with textiles, mostly knitting, as long as she can remember. She keeps a pair of socks on her double-pointed needles at all times to carry when she travels around North Carolina on a motorcycle with her husband.



SEASCAPE This was the first rug I knit with complete color control; it's still one of my favorites. Nine strips of garter stitch plus the black border.

Dimensions: 15" × 18" (38.1 × 45.7cm)

Techniques: Knit rug (similar to Crocheted rug)

Colleen Tiefenthal

BeachNut Studio

Etsy: BeachNutStudio

Maryland, USA

Colleen does beautiful design work, usually of seaside themes, lighthouses, sea turtles, and holidays. She's a designer with a ton of heart who does custom designs and is a pleasure to work with.





HOME TWEET HOME The prestige in this dazzling piece is these sweet proddy leaves peeping out from the scene.

Dimensions: 16" × 22" (40.6 × 55.9cm)

Techniques: Traditional hooked rug, Proddy rug



FRIENDS At first glance, this piece looks like an all-hooked project. But the wings and ears are floppy!

Dimensions: 14" × 20" (35.6 × 50.8cm)

Techniques: Traditional hooked rug, Proddy rug

Jen Metzner

Ontario, Canada

She's been hooking since she was 15, ever since she was taught to hook by her grandmother.



MAGICAL When a local craft store closed, Jen swooped in and found this Dimensions cross stitch pattern called “Midnight Enchanter” by James Himsworth. She blew it up on a photocopier and transferred it to burlap backing

to hook. It's hooked in #3 and #4 cuts, which explains that astonishing detail.

Dimensions: 13" × 20" (33 × 50.8cm)

Technique: Traditional hooked rug

Jo Wick

Ohio, USA

Jo is retired and has spent her free time becoming a prolific rug hooker.



BIG LOG HOUSE Hand-torn and hooked by Jo Wick, designed by Linda Brannock, this piece has the atmosphere and hallmarks of a classic primitive. The folk-art style pointedly disregards perspective and proportion, so the oversized flower beside the house is absolutely perfect in a primitive rug.

Dimensions: 29" × 50" (73.7cm × 1.3m)

Technique: Traditional hooked rug

Jennifer George

Connecticut, USA

Jennifer is a true rugger in the historic sense, using cut-up T-shirts, and a small metal crochet hook in latch hook backing. She is an artist who just “figured it out” on her own, crossing mediums and creating a simple and easy fusion of techniques. She’s rug hooking, into latch backing, with a crochet hook.



LAYERED RUG By confining stand-out colors to the borders of a rug, it creates a frame that highlights all the colors used within.

Dimensions: 40" × 36" (1m × 91.4cm)

Technique: Traditional hooked rug



NEON COLORS RUG This rug looks like a party! But there are faint columns of color that guide the eye rather than getting overwhelmed by the use of color and textures.

Dimensions: 40" × 36" (1m × 91.4cm)

Technique: Traditional hooked rug



JEWEL-TONE RUG A limited palette can make a piece with this much texture feel a little more reserved. While most of the strips are the same length and width, a few pieces are wider than the others. They add another textural element that make this piece amazing to look at.

Dimensions: 40" × 36" (1m × 91.4cm)

Technique: Traditional hooked rug

Marijo Taylor

Northwest Folk Design

Etsy: [northwestfolkdesign](#)

Oregon, USA

Marijo's art is a beautiful reflection of her experience growing up in the Pacific Northwest. As a student of nature, she finds beauty in unexpected things: a bay hemmed in by wild roses, a drive along a tree-lined river, a neighborhood stroll, an intriguing snip of fabric. Just about anything.



FLOWER There are so many colors used in this piece that it stands out from the crowd. The blues used in the stem and the shifting pinks of the border really make this piece unique.

Dimensions: 3¼" × 1½" (8.3 × 3.8cm)

Technique: Miniature punch needle



SEEDS OF LOVE Designed three days before Valentine's Day, Marijo wanted to create a design that felt hopeful and positive. There are fifteen hearts to hook on this piece

Dimensions: 32" × 24" (81.3 × 61cm)

Technique: Traditional hooked rug



ONE NATION INTERTWINED Her primitive style has all the whimsical trademarks of the very best folk art, but Marijo's palette is exquisitely soft. All her colors are named after the flora and fauna of the Pacific Northwest: butterflies, pinecones, the wood duck, and even the banana slug, who happens to be a beautiful antique green-gold.

Dimensions: 15" × 21" (38.1 × 53.3cm)

Technique: Traditional hooked rug

Claire Murray

Website: clairemurray.com

Massachusetts, USA

When Claire moved to Nantucket from New York, her seaside imagery of mermaids, lighthouses, gardens, and whaling ships have become iconic and synonymous with New England style.



HOME SWEET HOME An abundance of flowers makes this scene look both cozy and lively. The cottage and flowers are typical of what is seen in coastal New England.

Dimensions: 27" × 38" (68.6 × 96.5cm)

Technique: Traditional hooked rug

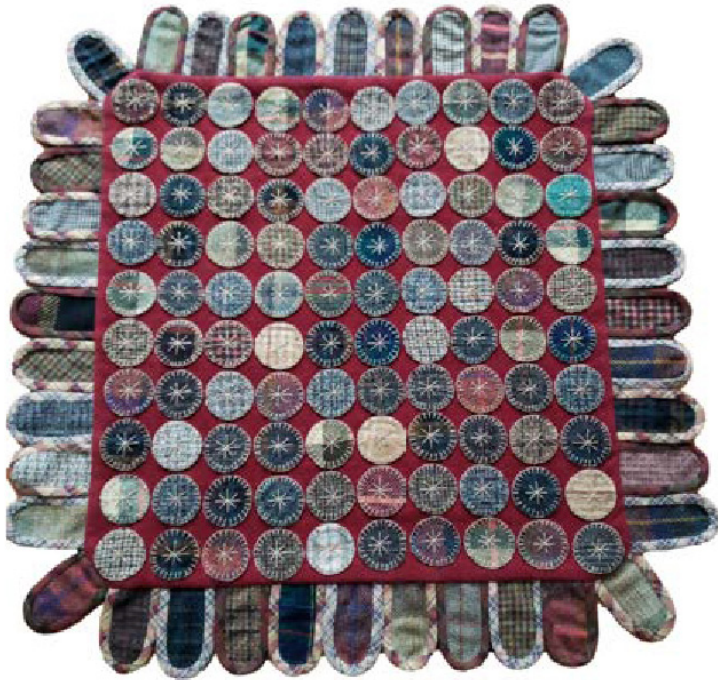
Colleen MacKinnon

Website: pennyrugsandmore.blogspot.com

Etsy: [pennyrugsandmore](https://www.etsy.com/shop/pennyrugsandmore)

British Columbia, Canada

Colleen is a master blogger and a wonderful writer. She dispenses focused help with the knowledge of an expert teacher and a generosity of spirit that you will find as warm and comforting as a woolly blanket.



PLAID PENNIES AND TONGUES MAT The colors and prints represented in this piece make for something truly special! Even the alternating lamb's tongues have colorful, unexpected bindings.

Dimensions: 26" × 26" (66 × 66cm)

Technique: Penny rug

Clare Utley

Utterly Hooked Designs

Website: utterlyhookeddesigns.co.uk

North Yorkshire, UK

Clare has transformed the look of the latch kit. Her charming designs bring the art of latch to where it should be: into the tradition of good taste and smart design. Clare's work feels like a nod to history, pulling from vintage needlework and knitwear, quilt designs, and quiet moments in the countryside.



TRADITIONAL TWIST This design combines antique embroidery, an impossibly quaint brick home, and the traditional alphabet and number possibilities of an historic sampler. With some lights on inside, other windows darkened, this playful design is perfect for customizing and putting your unique twist on.

Dimensions: 55" x 37" (1.4m x 94cm)

Technique: Latch hook rug



HAPPY HOME This cheerful take on a schoolhouse design contrasts a village full of bright, cozy cottages against a black background.

Dimensions: 37" × 27" (94x 68.9cm)

Technique: Latch hook rug



FAIR ISLE FANTASY A joyful take on the fair isle knit with a fantasy composition, a layer cake of winsome design, and a perfect color palette.

Dimensions: 44" × 33" (1.1m × 83.8cm)

Technique: Latch hook rug

Theresa Pulido

Color Crazy

Website: colorcrazy.com

California, USA

The art of Theresa Pulido is synonymous with locker hooking itself. She writes books, creates stunning original work, and keeps a busy online shop where she stocks all manner of locker hooking goodies.



SPRING BOUQUET This fresh and floral design uses long stitches and locker hooking to create beautiful petals and buds that feel larger than their actual size.

Dimensions: 11¼" × 11¼" (28.6 × 28.6cm)

Technique: Locker hooked rug



SUMMER BOUQUET Braided tendrils add a beautiful added detail to this textural piece.

Dimensions: 11¼" × 11¼" (28.6 × 28.6cm)

Technique: Locker hooked rug



AUTUMN BOUQUET The lush colors and organic shapes make this piece perfect for any time of year.

Dimensions: 11¼" × 11¼" (28.6 × 28.6cm)

Technique: Locker hooked rug



WINTER BOUQUET The simple color palette highlights the delicate petals and berries displayed in this piece.

Dimensions: 11¼" × 11¼" (28.6 × 28.6cm)

Technique: Locker hooked rug

Suzette Krummel

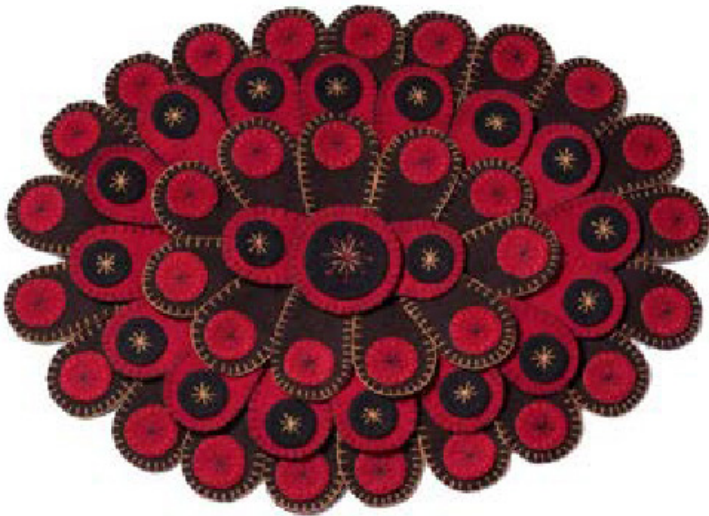
White Pine Folk Art

Website: whitepinefolkartwebsite.blogspot.com

Website: woolapplianceart.com

Illinois, USA

Suzette has been a needleworker for most of her life, her journey beginning with a crewel embroidery kit ordered from a magazine at age ten. After retiring from nursing, she was able to pursue her interests with penny rugs at the top of the list. Suzette has won the highest award as an artisan in *Directory of Traditional American Crafts* magazine, and her work is featured often within its pages.



RED AND BLACK RUG Red and white harmonize as well as the King and Queen of Hearts in a playing card deck on this lovely mat.

Dimensions: 25" (63.5cm) diameter

Technique: Penny rug



PEACOCK FEATHER RUG These stunning pennies evoke peacocks wandering across castle lawns

Dimensions: 18" (45.7cm) diameter

Technique: Penny rug



1852 RUG This lamb's tongue rug is a reproduction of a piece in an old country style decorating book from *Country Living* magazine.

Dimensions: 25" (63.5cm) diameter

Technique: Penny rug

Ryan Richards

Washington, USA

Ryan started punching a few years after his grandmother passed. She left a mountain of Aunt Lydia patterns, some hand punches, and a Rumpelstiltskin punch. Ryan thought the Rumpelstiltskin looked less intimidating than the hand punches and started with that. It's a difficult tool, and he soon switched to a vintage speed punch.



THE ASPENS Design by Rug Crafters. Because he is working at such a large size, Ryan has punched over three miles of yarn into it.

Dimensions: 7' × 5' (2.1 × 1.5m)

Technique: Traditional punch needle



ALPINE VILLAGE Design by Rug Crafters. This was the second piece Ryan did with the new tool. He said there was a bit of a learning curve, especially with an enormous project.

Dimensions: 7' × 5' (2.1 × 1.5m)

Technique: Traditional punch needle



BAR HARBOR Design by Rug Crafters. The foundation cloth used for this piece is a jute sateen.

Dimensions: 7' × 5' (2.1 × 1.5m)

Technique: Traditional punch needle

Emilia Roginsa

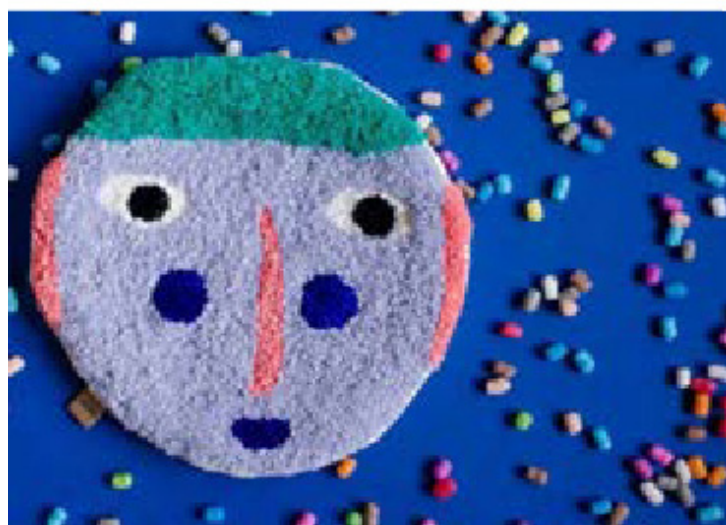
POOKA

Esty: pookatoys

Instagram: @pookatoys

Krakow, Poland

Emilia learned to sew and embroider from her grandmother and mother, then discovered punch needle. She taught herself and completely fell in love with the medium. She feels it gives her the fun and freedom to create original material from her observations of children, nature, and the things she loves.





POOKA PURSE The word pooka means “good animal spirit.” This piece is like all of Emilia’s works, which are simple, funny forms where the genius hides in simplicity. Her humor and love of life really come through in her work.

Dimensions: Approx. 11¾" (29.8cm) diameter

Technique: Traditional punch needle

Cheri White

Cheri uses weaver's cloth, CTR brand needles, one to two strands of embroidery floss, and rubber washers slipped on her needle to create different loop heights. For this piece, she worked with an 8mm punch needle, which creates an approximately 4mm loop height.



MEDIEVAL FLYING CAT This is Cheri White's second punch piece and the first in a Bestiary Panel of animals from Medieval manuscripts. It was punched on weaver's cloth with 2 strands of floss.

Dimensions: 6½" × 7¼" (16.5 × 18.4cm)

Technique: Miniature punch needle

Crystal Ross

Crystal Rugs

Website: crystalrugs.ca

Nova Scotia, Canada

A Canadian textile artist whose star is brightly and rightfully rising quickly. From her home she produces folk art rugs that are perfectly in step with the rug hooking royalty she comes from. Crystal humbly follows in the footsteps of her maternal grandparents who were both expert rug hookers from Cheticamp, Nova Scotia, the epicenter of hooking history.



FLOPPY FORGET ME NOTS Crystal works with 100% wool for its strength, durability, and ability to biodegrade. The wool is sourced in the Canadian Maritimes and dyed by hand on her stovetop, using her own color formulas.

Dimensions: 20½" × 28" (52 × 71cm)

Technique: Traditional punch needle



HORSE FRIENDS Crystal's forms are round and comforting, and her colors are reminiscent of childhood sweetness.

Dimensions: 34" x 21" (86.4 x 53.3cm)

Technique: Traditional punch needle



SQUIGGLES AND POM-POMS The organic shape of this rug matches the curving lines perfectly. The choice of colors also highlights the shapes while keeping the design fun and fresh.

Dimensions: 34½" x 26½" (87.6 x 67.3cm)

Technique: Traditional punch needle

Donna Munson

Country Keepers

Esty: MyCountryKeepers

Texas, USA

Donna fell in love with miniature punch needle when she recognized it as an art form that combined many of her interests—sketching, painting, garment construction, antique furniture, and the history of New England. She found punch more than twelve years ago and she still loves it, making and designing her old patterns.



THE GENTLEMAN RABBIT This fanciful piece calls back to classic children's storybooks, looking like a painting just hopped off the page.

Dimensions: 8" × 4½" (20.3 × 11.4cm)

Technique: Miniature punch needle



LOVE OFFERING The subtle shading to indicate the shapes in the skirt are just one aspect of this beautiful little piece.

Dimensions: 5½" × 3¼" (14 × 8.3cm)

Technique: Miniature punch needle



DRESSED FOR SPRING This sweet animal portrait has a quiet dignity by being placed on a dark background.

Dimensions: 4½" × 4½" (11.4 × 11.4cm)

Technique: Miniature punch needle

CHAPTER 1



Materials

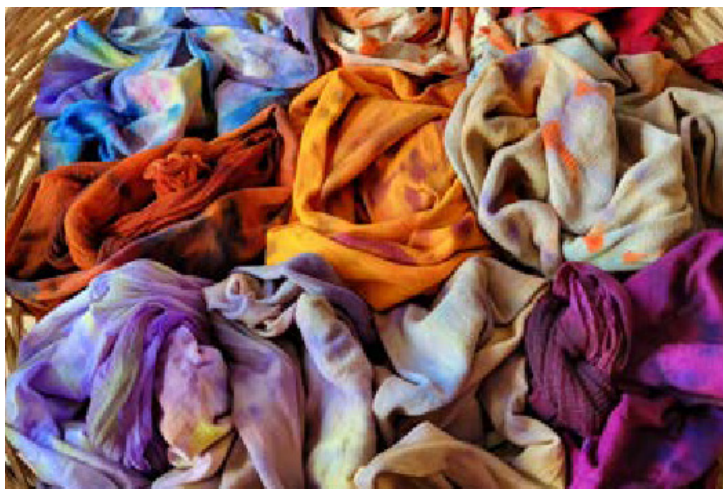
The beauty of making a handmade rug is in the vast creative possibilities. In the “olden days” people would keep “rag bags” filled with scraps of every type of material. Wooden bowls on the mantle were filled with rag balls, made up of collected strips of fabric all rolled together and waiting for the next project. The structure and assembly of some rug forms dictates the kinds of materials and tools that will work best, but none of the rag rug styles in this book have only one “right” option.

Just a Few of My Favorite Creative Rug Materials

The only limit to your creativity is what supplies you can gather. If

you go foraging in your own house or at local thrift stores, you'll likely find enough supplies to make 100 rugs! These are just a few of my favorites.

Rug hooking shops sell all kinds of rug-making materials and kits. Just like choosing yarn to knit a sweater or fabric for sewing a quilt, a major part of rug projects is figuring out what materials you want to use and how much of each you need to buy (or salvage). This chapter walks you through the various possibilities, from brand-new wool and cotton to old sweaters, and even candy wrappers!



Hand-dyed nylons and tights provide another opportunity to create uniquely personal creations.



When balloon animals were the hot craft with my kids, I made use of the discarded balloon scraps to add an unexpected surprise to this abstract piece (designed by my daughter Jocelyn).



Cut strips from brightly colored T-shirts to give them new life.

Ready-Made Materials

Wool—You can't name a more hard-wearing or beautiful material than wool. You can braid, hook, or sew any kind of wool rug, throw it on the floor, and know that a century from now it'll be just as beautiful as the day you made it. Wool dyes well and can be dyed a wide range of solid, mottled, spot dyed, and tie-dyed colors—wool can handle any style of surface dyeing and adds luxurious strength to any rag rug styles. With all these attributes, it's not surprising that wool is expensive—just one reason to delight in finding it at a thrift shop.

New store-bought woven wool is milled wool—it's been produced by a mill. It can be very thick (useful for making sewn projects like penny rugs), middle weight (which is great for most forms of rug making), and lightweight (which tends to fray more easily but is perfect for braiding). You can also incorporate raw forms of wool like wool roving and wool curls. Wool roving and curls can be found in natural colors, of course, but they're also available dyed a wide variety of brilliant colors.



Dyed wool roving adds unique color and texture to finished projects.



Milled wool is available brand new in a rainbow of colors and thicknesses.

Tip:

Sometimes you'll find new or recycled wool that's too thin for the type of rug you're making (it might fray too much and cause trouble). Try putting it in the washing machine and then heat drying it two or three times to "full" it (make it fuller) and create a texture closer to felt.



Some of the vintage quilt cottons in my collection have beautiful pattern and color combinations.



A hoard of old jersey bedding is a treasure trove for a rugmaker.

Cotton—Cotton is less hard-wearing than wool but it's less expensive, has the same dyeing options, and can be used for making many of the same types of rugs.

Quilt cotton is thinner and easier to work with if you're braiding or making a toothbrush or crocheted rug. I like using cottons for traditional rug hooking and looped latch hooking, and it also works well for making proddy rugs.

Batiks and solid colors are best to work with because they have no "wrong side," but cotton prints are colorful and used with care can add a fun theme to your projects. One-sided prints used in any rug-making techniques must be manipulated as you work so that the right side of the pattern is always showing.

Easy-to-source cotton jersey, like all stretch materials, is a real pleasure to work with. Stretch materials are two-sided so you never have the problem of needing to flip and fiddle with the fabric as you work. They're very forgiving, responsive, and inexpensive.

Silk—There are many kinds of silk, from thin silk sari material to thicker, nubbier dupioni, watered silk, and raw silk. Thin silks like taffeta are papery and crisp, similar to gift wrap tissue. Silk can be dyed to brilliantly intense colors and it appears richer and more luminous than other fabrics. Nineteenth century rugmakers and quilters often used silk because it was a common fabric that dyed beautiful and was easy to work with. As a natural fiber, silk holds up very well to wear, though the dyes used can sometimes cause damage to silks in early textile pieces.

I love using silk fabrics for traditional rug hooking, making proddy rugs, and for latch hooking. I like the bold color and the thin, crisp texture. Because many silks are associated with elegant formal wear, they create great contrast with rough, tweedy wools.



Silk sari ribbon is fun to dye, fun to handle, and adds a beautiful luster to boot.



A vast variety of yarns are out there, waiting for you.

Yarn—Half of the rug-making universe revolves around yarn. All the rugs that use a hook or punch can be executed with yarns of various weights. There are many gauges (thicknesses) and textures of yarn that can be used in creating all the rugs in the book, though not every type will be right for every project. Yarn is wonderfully soft but practical and is easily found in many shops. You can also source yarn by unraveling sweaters and scarves. Almost any material you can think of has been made into a yarn and each type possesses different qualities and attributes.

While wool yarn is strong and warm, many people are allergic to it and prefer to use something else. Synthetic yarns, like acrylics, are inexpensive, often washable, and are available in a broad range of reliable colors. I have heard very serious and renowned rugmakers say that they prefer common acrylic yarn brands because they have been able to find the exact same shade of antique gold or schoolhouse red since the 1970s. Synthetics may not have the luster of natural fibers, but it's worth trying everything to find what works best for your projects.

Novelty yarn is not rugged or reliable for use on the floor and won't allow for machine washing, but it can add a nice accent to wall hangings and decorative accessories. Eyelash yarns, ladder yarns, metallics, and bouclé all provide exciting colors and textures. Novelty yarns are almost always synthetic, so you must read the care instructions on the label if you plan to block your rug with heat or wash it.



Novelty yarns are almost always synthetics. They are the ruffly, fluffy, feathery bling of the yarn world.

Recycled Materials

Using castaway clothing and thrift shop finds creates twice the fun—you have the pleasure of treasure hunting and the happiness of knowing you're working with repurposed and inexpensive supplies. The two main concerns with using recycled materials are cleanliness and finding large enough quantities of a certain fabric. Be sure to clean recycled fabrics thoroughly, then try to harvest as much of the material as possible.

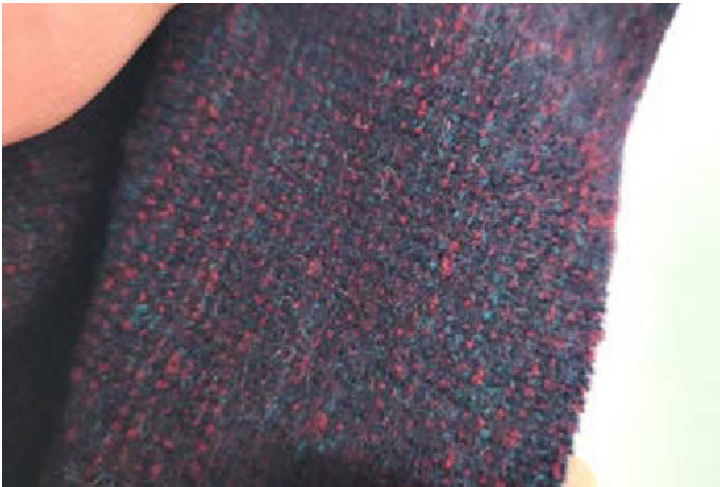
REPURPOSING OLD SWEATERS

Sweaters often get snags, stains, or holes, and some just go out of style. All wool and wool-blend sweaters will be just as hard-wearing as milled wool yardage. Knit sweaters make wonderful stash builders and are a pleasure to use in all of the hooked techniques. Be careful, though—you'll want your wool sweaters to be "full" enough that they have the integrity and body to be useful in rug making, but not so felted that they're too thick to use. I always run wool sweaters through the washer and dryer on medium heat first to see how they emerge. Sweaters should come out looking a bit shrunk, but not super thick. If they're not pliable at all, they won't be usable for rug making. If the fiber is still loose, I run the sweater through the washer and dryer a second time on high heat.

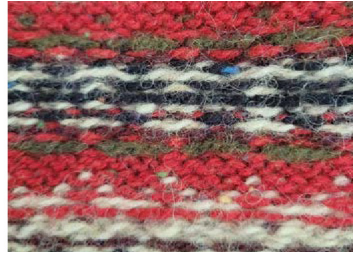
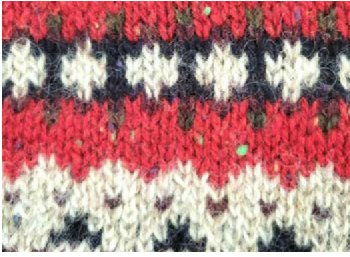
Cable-knit sweaters won't work for rag rug techniques that use strips of fabric because of the way the cables are knit. Fair Isle sweaters also won't work. Although their beautiful rainbow yokes are pretty, they are made up of many different pieces of yarn. As soon as you cut into the pretty design, the weave falls apart.



This knit sweater has a loose weave that is open and liable to unravel and fall apart. It's easy to imagine pulling at the edge and seeing it fall to pieces.



This knit has a much tighter weave. It will be more durable and will better withstand cutting, manipulation, and rug techniques like traditional hooking or latch hook.



Fair Isle sweaters are beautiful with all their flecks of color and delightful patterns (left) but when you look at the reverse side (right) you can see that the weave is literally held together with threads.

Add a Personal Touch to Your Pieces

The dearest category of recycled fabrics is “heirloom fabrics”—nostalgic materials taken from old family clothing or blankets. I’ve kept my children’s baby clothes, my dad’s necktie, and his famous plaid Thanksgiving pants. Many families have attic treasures—reminders of holidays and vacations past. These textiles can be worked into your rag rugs, making each piece extra special and completely unique.



Every year my dad “shamed” our family by wearing very loud plaid pants for Thanksgiving and Christmas. Now that he’s gone, the pants have become treasured memorial pillows for me, my mom, and my sister.

How to Prepare Sweaters for Rugging

Use the following steps to prepare suitable sweaters for rugging. Once the fabric is prepared, you can cut the smaller pieces you need for the technique you’re working with.



1. Wash and dry your chosen sweater on medium to high heat so it is clean and a bit felted.



2. Use a pair of scissors to cut off all the ribbing—the cuffs, the hem, and any other trim.



3. Cut the individual pieces apart. You are reverse engineering the construction of the garment.



4. Cut all the seams off and discard them.

Unraveling a Sweater to Harvest Yarn

You can reverse engineer old sweaters to harvest the yarn if your

chosen technique requires yarn rather than wool fabric. I use a yarn winder to transform sweaters that no longer fit back into tidy, usable supplies of yarn.

Unraveling a sweater first requires deconstructing the sweater into separate pieces, following the [How to Prepare Sweaters for Rugging](#) instructions on here, but using a seam ripper to gently separate the seams rather than cutting them. Cutting the sides with scissors would create a lot of short lengths of yarn and while you could still use these short lengths, it generally makes the whole process less efficient.

Once you've separated the sweater pieces, search near the top of one of the pieces to find a strand that seems most likely to unravel. It can be hard to find at first, but once you do, begin to pull, winding the unraveling yarn into a ball as you work.



Cut any tags out carefully—they will get in the way of your unravelling.



I use a yarn winder because I do this a lot, but you can just as easily wind your harvested yarn into a ball by hand.



Sometimes knits unravel easily and quickly, sometimes they snag or end in unexpected spots, but just keep going. Since you won't be knitting with this yarn, it's fine if your ball is made up of many shorter pieces. Any kinks in the yarn will also relax over time.

Separating Colors from Mixed-Color Skeins

Inexpensive acrylic skeins and variegated boutique hanks can be broken down into smaller balls of single colors. Use your yarn spinner or wind them into balls by hand. It feels great to harvest a full palette of new colors from a single skein. The beauty of breaking down these mixed-color cakes is that the colors already match.



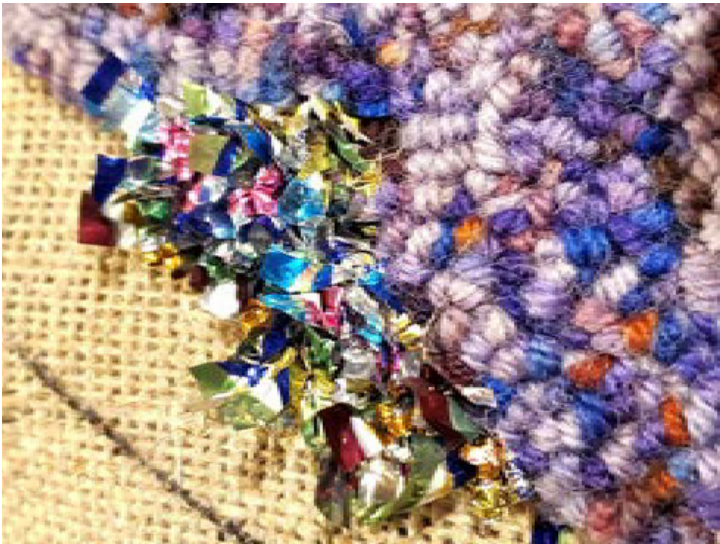
The big, mixed-color, high-yardage yarn cakes you find at big-box craft stores often comprise a dozen or more colors you can separate out as needed.

I pulled all of these colors from just two big multicolor yarn cakes. They gave me a very large palette to work with!

Nontraditional Materials

Because of the growing awareness of overfull landfills and the push to recycle, people are trying to make use of more materials than ever. Cutting up garbage bags and plastic shopping bags has been common in rug making since the 1970s. Using fleece and stretch velvet has become more popular in recent years. Sometimes when I want to add a crazy, shiny material, I cut up and use candy wrappers or foil party balloons. I have even used synthetic hair swatches from the beauty store in my rugs to add a mermaid's tresses or mimic moonlight. It's good to keep an open mind; otherwise, you miss chances to truly dazzle with your work.

The bottom line is—if it works with your technique and you like the way it looks, use it! You'll discover new materials to use all the time (and feel the excitement of an explorer every time).



One of the benefits of my kids never throwing garbage into the trash is that I find rug materials I wouldn't normally consider. After holidays, I often find the most exquisite candy wrappers littering the coffee table. They're perfect for adding unexpected glitz to a piece!

A Modern Favorite—Stretch Velvet

Stretch velvet is one of my favorite materials to use for rug making. You can buy it new, but you can also harvest material from old leotards and holiday dresses. While nonstretch velvet like silk velvet and velveteen are pretty, they aren't great for rugmaking. Stretch velvet, like all stretch materials, is very forgiving and supple and has a wonderful sheen; it also tends to curl in on itself, meaning it doesn't matter if there is a right side or wrong side to the fabric.

There are two minor downsides to using stretch velvet. The first is the lint. I use scissors to cut stretch velvet with the right sides together to minimize the lint, and it still kicks up a storm of fine, dusty fibers. Its luminous appearance and soft texture make it well worth it, however.

The second is that stretch velvet is synthetic, so it's difficult to dye. Synthetics don't work with standard dyes (which are made for natural fibers) and instead require synthetic dyes. You also need to know the exact ratio of spandex, nylon, acrylic, or polyester, since that dictates the type of synthetic dye you need to use.



Stretch velvet is one of my favorite materials to work with. It's lush, tactile, and outrageously colorful.



Sometimes I'll find stretch velvet scrunchies in beautiful colors. I buy them to deconstruct so I can work with the material—it only yields a small amount, but it's perfect for creating small, colorful pops.



I've been working on this adaption of an antique rug design, traditionally hooking the whole thing in stretch velvet.



In this close-up you can really see how the material shines.

Rug Backing Materials

The type of rag rug you want to make and the way you like to work will determine the type of backing you use (if any). Amish toothbrush rugs, braided rugs, crocheted rugs, and some types of quillie rugs don't require any backing fabric (although you can add backings if desired). Traditional hooked rugs and proddy rugs are most often worked in burlap, linen, monk's cloth, or rug warp. Latch hook, looped latch, and locker hook use rug mesh backing with larger holes. Penny rugs often have wool backing fabric, but most sturdy fabrics will work. Traditional punch needle can be worked in many types of fabric and miniature punch needle requires something with some stretch, like weaver's cloth.

Burlap—Burlap has a loose weave and is inexpensive. Burlap can rot when wet, but if you are not putting your rug on the floor and it's destined to serve as a wall hanging, you can use burlap.

Linen—Linen has a slightly tighter weave than burlap and is probably the most expensive backing material. It is available in a range of textures, from soft and supple to coarse.

Monk's cloth—Monk's cloth is a white all-cotton fabric with a tighter weave than linen. Monk's cloth for rug making is completely different from the monk's cloth made for needlepoint.

Rug warp—Rug warp is usually cotton and has a much tighter weave than the other traditional rug hooking backing materials.

Rug mesh backing—Rug mesh backing is a stiff canvas with large windowpane holes in various gauges. These holes are much bigger than those in the other woven fabrics listed here.

Weaver's cloth—Weaver's cloth is a cotton and polyester blend fine-woven cloth that has a bit of stretch. Weaver's cloth is ideal for miniature punch needle. The stretchy fabric allows the miniature needle to punch through, but quickly closes back in on the floss or yarn to secure each tiny loop.



Burlap



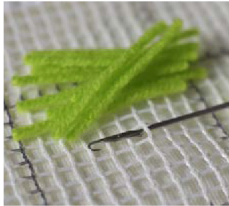
Linen



Monk's cloth



Rug warp



Rug mesh backing



Weaver's cloth

CHAPTER 2



Tools

Rag rug making is a varied and flexible art—there is an abundance of different styles and methods for applying the various techniques. There are a few tools that are generally helpful throughout the process no matter what type of rug you’re making, but there are also specialized tools created solely for working on a single type of rug. Each technique lists exactly which of the following tools you’ll need to make a rug in a particular style.

Specialized Rug-Making Tools

Toothbrush needle—The toothbrush needle is basically a thick, very strong hardwood needle with a large eye. They were created by an ingenious crafter in the past who saw the hole in the end of their old toothbrush and realized they could cut the top off, file it, and create a new, useful tool! **Used for The Amish Toothbrush Rug technique on here.**

Crochet hooks—Crochet hooks are made from wood, metal, bamboo, and plastic. Use the type of hook that feels best in your hand and moves through the material smoothly. They are also available in different sizes and you'll want to try to match the crochet hook to the thickness of your material. The thicker the crochet hook, the thicker the material you can crochet with. Tiny hooks won't be able to work thicker materials at all and thick hooks matched with thinner materials will create large gaps in the finished piece (which will be major tripping hazards in a rug). **Used for The Crocheted Rug technique on here.**

Traditional rug hook—Traditional rug hooks developed from bent nails set into wooden handles. They're now much like a crochet hook with a thick, ergonomic wooden handle. The metal hook grabs the fabric from your hand below the backing fabric and pulls it through to the front to create the loops. **Used for The Traditional Hooked Rug technique on here.**



Modern rug hooks feature comfortable wooden handles and hooked metal ends for pulling loops of fabric through the backing.



I often use wooden crochet hooks. I found this collection for a great price at an antiques shop.



I usually use a US size 18 hook when I crochet with T-shirt strips.



This is my traditional-style proddy tool.



This spring proddy tool has a needle-nose clamp tip with gripping teeth and a lever for pressure balance. It is designed to pull the proddy pieces through the backing rather than pushing them down through.

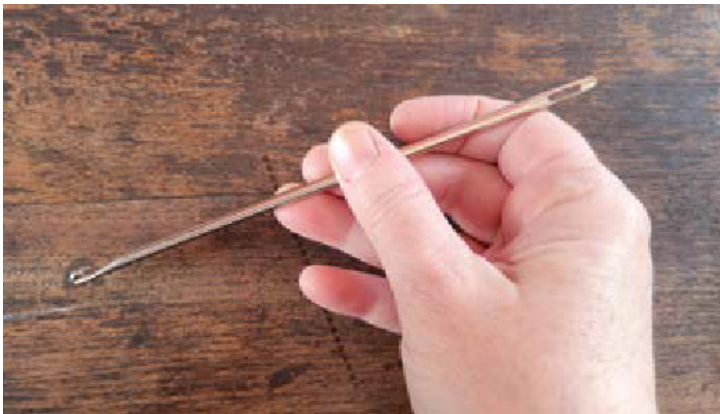
Proddy tools—The proddy tool, also known as a prodder or prodding tool, has not changed much over the years. It can be anything with a

dull point that will push fabric through the backing. I sell proddy tools through Ribbon Candy Hooking because it's difficult to find them in the U.S. (since proddy is much more common in the U.K.), but many makers improvise their own tools—some even using old pens and pen caps. While proddy is traditionally worked in reverse by poking fabric through the back of the piece to create the pile on the other side, a variation evolved in which makers pull the fabric pieces through instead. This style of prodding is worked right side up. Those who prefer working this way use a spring proddy tool. **Used for The Proddy Rug technique on here.**



Most early latch hooks (like this one) were of a pen design, meaning they were slender rather than bulbous. Many newer latch hooks have more rounded handles.

Latch hook—Latch hooks are similar to traditional rug hooks, but they have a small latch mechanism built into the shaft that helps to create knots around the rug mesh backing. **Used for The Latch Hook Rug technique on here and The Looped Latch Rug technique on here.**



Locker hook—A locker hook looks similar to a crochet hook on one end and has an eye on the other end, like a needle. The hooked end is used to pull fabric loops up through the rug mesh backing and the eye

end is used to thread twine through these loops. **Used for The Locker Hooked Rug technique on here.**

Traditional punch needles—Punch needles developed out of the Industrial Revolution desire to mechanize and speed up every process, including hand embroidery. The modern punch needle, perfected and made famous by Amy Oxford, is a hand-held punch needle made for use with one working hand. They're available in regular and fine shaft widths and are also numbered based on the height of the loops they produce. Generally speaking, when people refer to a traditional punch needle, they are referring to this Oxford-style punch needle. Many people, however, continue to use and favor the older shuttle and eggbeater styles or use electric punch needles and tufting guns. Any tool that punches into a backing cloth, is worked from the back side, and produces a pile made up of loops is a type of punch needle. **Used for the Traditional Punch Needle technique on here.**



Modern Oxford-style punch needles are meant to be used in one hand.



This vintage electric punch needle is a precursor to modern tufting guns. It's based on the same idea as the humble punch needle.

Miniature punch needle—The miniature punch needle technique, being a miniature version of traditional punch needle, employs a much smaller tool, closer in size and appearance to a hypodermic needle. These smaller punch needles are threaded with much thinner threads (and must be threaded with a threader), but the overall process is the same. Since there are different sizes of miniature punch needles, you can use different sizes of yarn, floss, and thread. Review any instructions provided with the needles you buy and carefully match your punch needles with yarn and thread based on their thickness. If you know, for example, that your punch is a three-strand punch, shop for three-strand flosses or separate your floss threads. **Used for the Miniature Punch Needle technique on here.**



This Danella punch needle is similar to an eggbeater. According to the manufacturer, it can make up to 200 loops per minute.



The difference between the Oxford punch needle on the left and the miniature punch needle on the right is easy to see.

General Tools



I use special bent scissors to clip my backgrounds. They're expensive, but helpful. Regular scissors will work for pretty much everything else.

Scissors—Regular scissors are useful for cutting and trimming your materials and shaping your rug backing. If you plan on shaping parts of your finished rug (see [Finishing Your Latch Hook Rug](#) on here, for example), consider investing in a pair of bent or curved scissors.



Straight pins, clamps, or binder clips—Straight pins are useful for many different purposes in rug making. You can pin certain types of rugs, such as braided rugs, to a foam surface to keep them in place as you work. Pins are also useful if you're working on a sewn rug and need to hold pieces in place during the design process. You can use clamps or binder clips to secure a rug in progress to a clip board or solid wood piece.



Foam boards or clip boards—Foam boards, like a quilting board or even a foam piece for a child’s floor, are useful work surfaces for braided rugs and some of the other hand-worked rugs. They’re solid enough to hold your piece, but soft enough that you can pin the piece in place with straight pins. Clip boards or similar solid pieces, are helpful when using a binder clip or clamp to hold your rug in place.



Safety pins, clips, or clothespins—Generally, these items are useful for keeping track of your stitches and marking where increase stitches will be needed. Safety pins can be used in place of straight pins when holding together fabric pieces for sewn rug techniques, but they are also useful tools when working on braided rugs—you can mark each safety pin with a number and attach them to the ends of your working strands to keep everything organized.



Plastic needles—Thin plastic needles are very helpful for certain finishing techniques, especially for cleanly weaving in the ends of a braided rug.

Cardboard—Regular cardboard is an inexpensive tool for making yarn sizing templates or round templates for penny cutting.



Sewing and doll needles—Sewing needles are useful for creating stitched-together styles like penny rugs and for making quillies. If you're creating really thick, large quillies or want to link a few smaller quillies together at one time, you'll need to use a doll needle, which is a 5" (12.7cm) flexible needle.



Thread, embroidery floss, yarn, twine—Thread, floss, yarn, or twine are used for many of the rugs in the book. Decorative flosses and lightweight yarns are used to sew together penny rugs, twine or yarn is required for the locker hook technique, and both traditional punch needle and miniature punch needle make use of yarn or floss to create their designs.

Heavyweight thread—Quillie rugs require heavyweight or upholstery weight thread—something strong enough to hold the quillies in shape.



This is a selection of the different styles of frames I have. Some rest on your lap, one is a floor frame, and a couple collapse for travel. They all have needled strips on the outside that securely grip fabric.

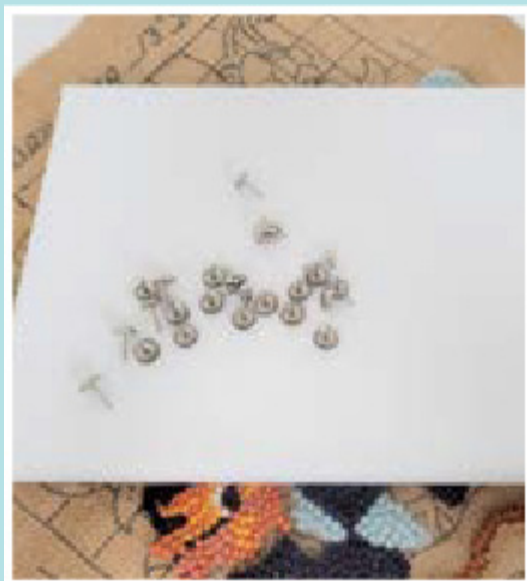


Embroidery hoops and quilting hoops also work well. When you're traditional rug hooking, you have one hand beneath the piece feeding material to your hook, so the extra space below a quilting hoop is particularly useful.

Rug hooking frames, embroidery hoops, or quilting hoop—Rug hooking frames and hoops are used to hold the backing fabric very taut, making it easier to work with. For most makers, rug hooking frames or hoops greatly improve the entire process. Some makers prefer working without a frame, instead simply holding the piece in their lap while they work. I recommend starting with a hoop or small frame and trying the different options to see what works best for you.

How to Make Your Own Rug Hooking Frame

If you don't want to buy an expensive rug frame or hoop, it's easy to make a functional "frame"—just start with a basic art canvas of any size and some thumbtacks or upholstery tacks. It's okay if your design is larger than the canvas frame, you just need to hold the section you are working on taut at any given time. The tacks won't damage your rug, so you can place and remove them as often as needed and move the pattern on the frame as you work.

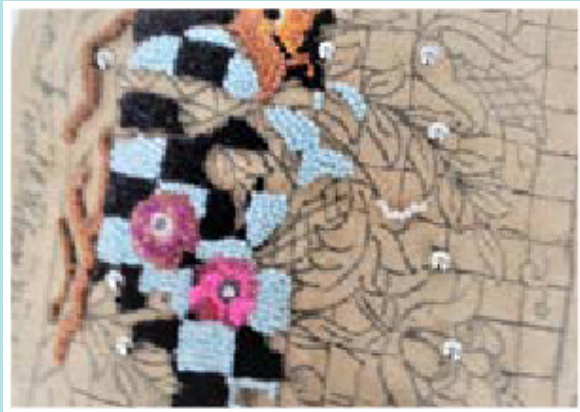


A basic wooden-framed art canvas and some thumbtacks or upholstery tacks are all you need to make an effective frame to hold your backing fabric taut.





1. Remove the canvas from the wooden frame.



2. Tack your backing fabric onto the frame and get to work.

Pattern Transfer Tools



Black permanent marker—Black permanent markers are useful for freehand drawing directly onto backing fabric, but you can also use them for tracing with fiberglass mesh tape or light boxes.



Fiberglass mesh tape—Fiberglass mesh tape is tacky, but not too sticky, on one side, so you can stick it down to a design, trace the design, then pull up and restick the fiberglass mesh tape on top of your backing fabric and trace through the open grid to transfer the image. Use large yard-size rolls.

Transfer pens—You can use transfer pens to draw your design directly on paper, then place that paper face down on the backing fabric and iron it to transfer the image.

Erasable markers—Erasable markers are the best option for drawing directly onto your backing fabric should you need to make changes as you go. You can easily erase the marks with heat and redraw the image.



Clothing iron—Clothing irons are required with the methods that use heat to transfer images or remove marks, such as transfer pens and erasable markers.

Light boxes—Light boxes (or simply a window and some tape) are useful for backlight tracing. The light shines through the image and you use a marker to trace it onto the backing fabric.



Dyeing Tools

Synthrapol—Synthrapol is a soaking accelerant that helps the dye soak into your material more quickly. Some makers use products like Jet-Dry® in place of Synthrapol.



Citric acid—Citric acid is available as a powder and works to help the dye soak into the material.

Dyes—Materials used to add color to fabric or fibers, including powder chemical dyes, dyes from natural sources, egg coloring sets, and even food dyes and drink mixes.



Measuring spoons—These are useful if you want to precisely measure your dyes as you add them (if you want to create consistent

colors every time). You can also use regular spoons or sprinkle dyes with a gloved hand. Be certain to designate a set of measuring spoons that you only use for dyeing—never for cooking.



Mask and gloves—Masks are a must when working with powder dye so you don't breathe in any particles. Once the powder is integrated into the water, you are safe to remove the mask. Gloves are useful throughout the dyeing process to protect your hands from chemicals or staining.



Mixing and heating vessels—You'll need vessels for mixing dye and water (into which you'll add your fabric or fiber). Pots and pans,

casserole dishes, and baking sheets are the best options when you need to set the dye with heat. I recommend white enamel baby bathtubs and plastic tubs if only mixing is necessary. These vessels should be dedicated solely to dyeing and must never be used for cooking.



Mixing tools—Your mixing tools can be pretty much anything useful for stirring and agitating the fabric and fibers as they dye. I often use potato mashers and wooden spoons, again making sure they are only ever used for dyeing, never for cooking.



Squirt bottles—Squirt bottles, also known as applicator bottles, are the best tools for spot dyeing ([see here](#)).

Heat source—Most dyes require some sort of heat to set into the fabric or fiber. You can use your stovetop, oven, microwave, and even the sun.

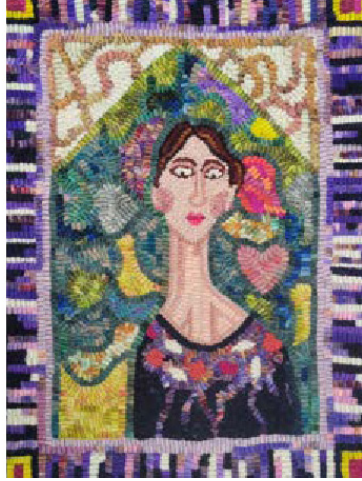
CHAPTER 3



Designing, Transferring, and Sizing

Inspiration is magical and elusive, that's for sure. The strangest, smallest moment sometimes catches you by surprise and gifts you an idea. Looking at books, visiting places you love, taking a road trip, or visiting a friend can often drum up inspiration.

When you are having a quiet moment and you're at peace with the world, take a walk through your memories. All your stories are sources of inspiration. Think of the places you've been and the places you have yet to travel to. Memories yet to be made are also good sources of inspiration. All the people you love, the things you own, the things you've seen, and the things you are provide fertile subjects for your designs.



My mom loves this little bust I bought while I was living in Amsterdam. She sketched it and we translated her sketch into a design (which I hooked as a birthday gift for her).



Aileen Cassels hooked this lovely rug inspired by Scarlett the dog, her aunt's poodle. She sent it to her aunt (who lives in Scotland) as a Christmas present.

Using Commercial Patterns

Companies like mine have been designing and charting patterns since the beginning of crafting. Whether you need to follow a diagram to make an extra-long rag runner for your hall or you want to create a perfect country cow for a wall hanging, there's a wealth of commercial patterns available.

Counted or charted patterns, like those used for needlepoint and cross stitch, give you the information you need to add ease, round corners, taper, and flare. For many rug techniques, patterns include the math that makes the design work. Without the right changes made at the right times, some of these rugs can become frustratingly misshapen.

Picture patterns are available for rug forms that include images rather than just simple patterns and color changes. Depending on the construction technique, many rag rugs are made on a foundation already printed with a picture to be filled in. These commercial patterns are usually already color-planned for you. They come in an endless variety of themes and color schemes pulling from every era of design.



I have a large collection of vintage commercial patterns I'm saving for a rainy day.

Creating Original Patterns

Original patterns are ones that you design yourself. You are a museum filled with memories of your favorite people, pets, and places. All your stories are unique and worthy subjects for rug making. The most beautiful antique rugs are whimsical and truly naive in design and construction. If you don't feel like a capable enough artist to create an original pattern out of nothing, use tools to help you. There are many easy ways to make fabulous, original patterns. Remember that the women of early America based many of their designs on memories of objects and patterns they had seen. Using household objects like plates or postcards to create shapes was a very common way of designing.

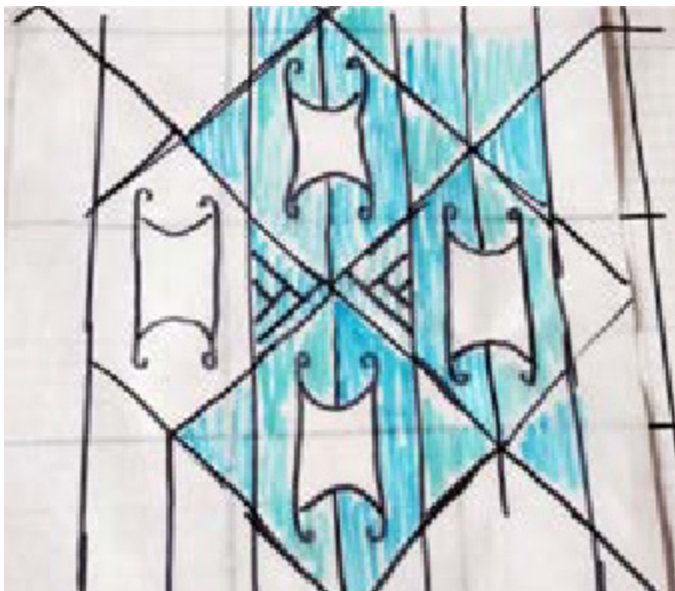




My daughter Jocelyn designed this gem called River Rocks, which I turned into an original pattern.



I found this devil's purse (the egg pouch of a shark or ray) washed up on Cape Cod. It's also the name of my brother-in-law's favorite local brewery, so finding it inspired me to create a birthday present rug for him.



I use graph paper and tracing paper whenever I plan geometric designs. It's easy to establish lines and build a consistent pattern.



This is my finished design, ready for color planning and construction. It'll be the perfect gift (along with a six-pack of his Devil's Purse Brewing Co. favorite).

DESIGNING WITH COOKIE CUTTERS

Many people collect antique cookie cutters or have cookie cutters that hold a lot of sentimental value. Tracing these silhouettes is an easy way to create a simple pattern. You simply trace the cutter directly onto the backing material and fill in the surrounding area with lines and curves. Just be sure to keep contrast in mind—you want the cookie cutter shape to stand out and be distinct from your background.



Designing with a cookie cutter is a great way to get started. Trace the cutter and fill in the area surrounding it with pattern and color.

DESIGNING WITH STENCILS

Creating a stencil to trace is another great way to construct an original design. In the late nineteenth century, a tin peddler in Maine, Edward Sands Frost, noticed that many women struggled with the design part of rug creation. He began toying with copper in his shed, cutting out stencils and tracing them onto sack backings. These were probably the

first “commercial” patterns available for rug hooking.



Since cookie cutters come in simple silhouette shapes, they really lend themselves to creating folk designs.



Be sure to choose contrasting colors to clearly set off the main cookie cutter shape.



I often run themed online classes on designing with stencils. This autumn stencil class was inspired by the man in the center, Edward Sands Frost, the first commercial rug hooking pattern maker.



My good friend Kirsten Gay used stencils to create a brilliant design called Seven Tangled Cats. She moved the stencil shapes around until she was happy with the arrangement.



This rug conveys all the energy and movement of Kirsten's original "cat scramble" design and would be equally successful in other color schemes.

USING PAPER CUTTING DESIGNS

German papercutting, known as *scherenschnitte*, became part of the American story in the late eighteenth century among Pennsylvania

Germans. We call this aesthetic and heritage Pennsylvania Dutch now, but these settlers were German (the German word for “German” is “Deutsch,” causing some confusion over the years since it sounds like “Dutch”). German papercutting is the technique of folding a paper into halves, quarters, or thirds and then cutting it with scissors to create fine, filigree decorations. The result is always symmetrical, whimsical, and easy to trace onto backing fabric.



This is an example of the scherenschnitte I made in a class I took with my mom a few years back. Little did I know how much the concept would inspire me for future designs.



I first came up with this Halloween design using paper and scissors. I adapted it for rug hooking with yarn and called it *I Can't Stop Thinking About Halloween*.

USING CHILDREN'S ART

There can hardly be a better designer than a child. And there can hardly be a more fun and meaningful rug than one created from a child's drawing. The very nature of folk art is that it is untrained. I am constantly turning my kids' drawings into rugs. My daughter Jocelyn has that hit-the-ground-running approach to life that we all have as young children but seem to lose later in life. She always dives right in without worrying about the planning—what could possibly go wrong? The simple, shaky lines and the lack of rules—no perspective, no proportion, no horizon line, no shadow—make for the most charming designs.



My daughter's *Jam Sandwich* design has become the most iconic pattern at Ribbon Candy Hooking. Jam's lumpiness and awkward stance is endearing, and

the color placement (directed by Jocelyn) creates the feeling of folk art.



Jocelyn made this quick late-night sketch, which she described by saying: "it's raining candy."





My reworking of her fantastic concept, later called *Pumpkin Rain*.

Transferring Your Pattern

Freehand drawing directly onto the fabric is the most basic method for adding your design directly to your backing. I often draw directly onto backing fabrics like monk's cloth, linen, burlap, weaver's cloth, and rug warp fabric with a black permanent marker. If you want to refine and perfect your design before adding it to your backing fabric, you'll need to transfer it. There are many options for effectively transferring rug designs!

USING FIBERGLASS MESH TAPE

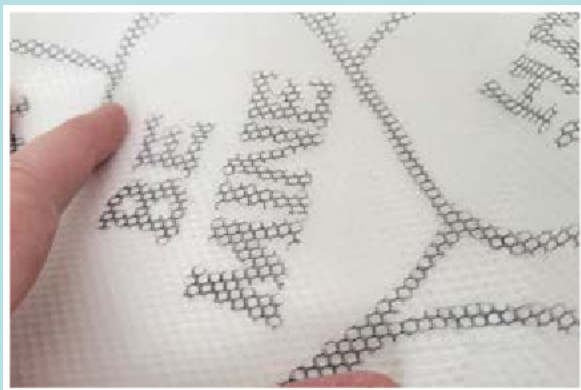
When I'm transferring to a cloth backing, I almost always use fiberglass mesh tape (I recommend Fibatape®), which is sometimes called "crack stop" at hardware stores. Its purpose is to stick on cracks in the walls of older houses to give extra support. The tape is tacky on one side, but not overly sticky. Use large yard-size rolls. The first few steps help you square your image—having your pattern perfectly squared with the grain of the backing fabric is very important. Even if it's just a hair off it will be difficult to see where your edges are. Edges that aren't squared create diagonals (and a lot of mess the further you get into a piece).

Alternative Tool—Tulle!

Some people love to use tulle, the thinner, finer, netting-like fabric used for ballet costumes, to transfer. Tulle is used almost exactly like fiberglass mesh tape, it just needs to be pinned securely to the backing fabric. Tulle is usually less expensive and easier to find than fiberglass mesh tape. If you are transferring a simple design, tulle will work perfectly. There are a couple things to consider when trying this technique:

- Have pins handy since tulle tends to slip. Move your pins as you trace, being certain to keep the tulle securely in position.
- Choose a true tulle over netting. Netting is usually too thick and has

wider holes. If the material is too thick, the tip of the marker won't be able to reach the backing fabric.



You can trace patterns directly onto tulle exactly the same way you would trace them onto fiberglass mesh tape.



It will be no problem for the marker's ink to reach the backing fabric through the tulle. Tulle isn't tacky like fiberglass mesh tape, however, so be sure to securely pin it down so it doesn't shift while you're tracing.



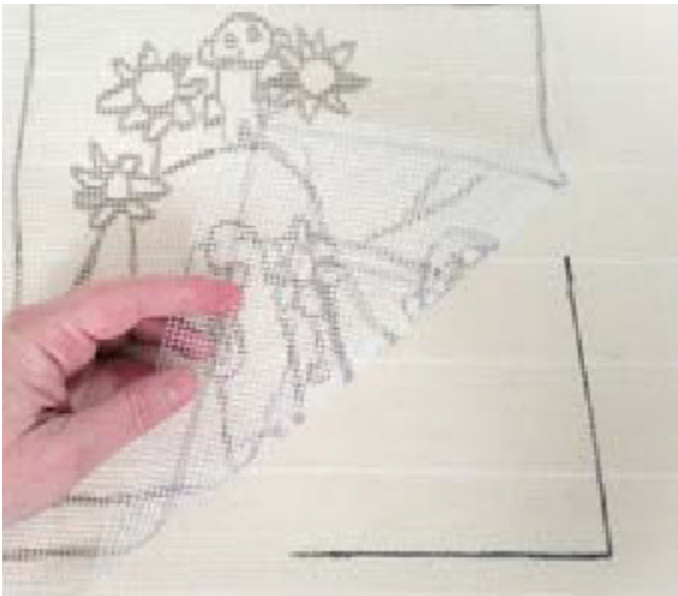
1. Lay the image in the center of the backing fabric to get a feel for the space. Place the fiberglass mesh tape on top and trace the design onto the tape. (**Note:** I'm using Jocelyn's *Flower Pots* design.)



2. Peel the fiberglass mesh tape off and stick it down to the backing. It doesn't have to be perfect.



3. Make small marks at the centers of the top, bottom, left, and right border lines.



4. Connect the marks by drawing the lines freehand, carefully following the grain of the material. Go slowly and keep your marker as steady as you can. Your lines will meet at the corners.



5. Reposition the fiberglass mesh tape so the image is centered inside this frame. Trace over the image on the tape.



6. Peel the fiberglass mesh tape away and touch up as needed. Don't use too much ink, however—it can smudge. Just be sure the image is clearly visible.

USING TRANSFER PENS

Very small or detailed patterns, like those you might create for a miniature punch needle project or a highly detailed rug hooking piece, might have so many fine lines and such intricate elements that it makes sense to use a transfer pen. These are heat-activated pens that have

worked the same way for a long time. Just remember—if you use a transfer pen, you must reverse the image before you transfer or you will transfer it backward. (I've made that mistake more times than I care to remember.)



1. Shake the transfer pen well. Then press the tip down (it will retract) until you see that black ink has been drawn into the nib. Trace the image lines with the pen.



2. Place the drawing face down on the backing fabric and use a few pins to secure it. Iron the paper without steam, moving the pins as needed.

Tip:

If the lines start to show darkly through the paper, those parts are transferring really well. It won't all be perfect, but this is something you can look for.



3. Unpin one side and peek underneath. Transfer pens often don't create a uniform transfer, so some lines will be stronger than others and often whole areas won't transfer right away. Sneak peeks and continue ironing and adding ink to parts of the drawing as needed until the transferred image is clear enough to work with.



4. Peel the paper off carefully, knowing it probably won't all be even and there may be gaps. Darken up lines and fill in any spaces as needed with a fine-tip permanent marker.

USING ERASABLE MARKERS

Erasable markers are available in various nib types that create fine, bold lines and are great for drawing directly onto any backing fabrics. If you decide you want to change your design after you've drawn it, simply iron the drawing and it disappears. This is a great trick when you are designing as you go. A lot of us are impulsive when inspiration strikes, and these markers make it possible to be impulsive without regret.



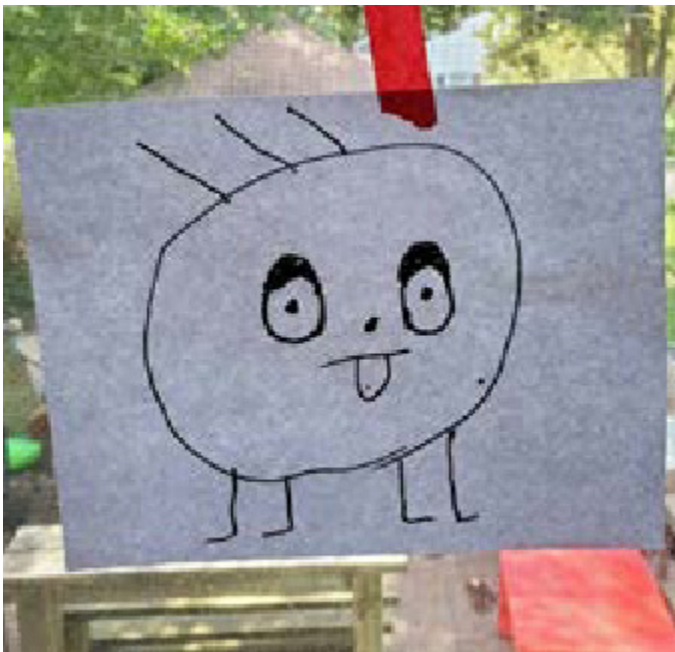
Pilot® FriXion® Erasable Markers and similar products have erasable ink that disappears with heat.

USING BACKLIGHT



Depending on the backing fabric you're using, a light box can really help. I often find them to be too dim, but the brightness varies between different light boxes and based on the thickness of the fabric.

Many artists like using light boxes to trace their designs. I most often use this technique when I'm transferring a design onto weaver's cloth for miniature punch needle projects. A windowpane works the same way as a light box—backlight shines through the image and fabric, making it easier to trace. You can tape your image and backing fabric directly to a window and trace it the same way you would on a light box. This is a great method when you have a simple design or if you are just in a hurry.



1. Start with your image drawn or printed in solid, dark ink. Tape it onto a bright window or place it on top of a light box.



2. Tape the backing fabric over the image (allowing the light to shine through) and trace it with a permanent marker. The image is now transferred and ready to make!

What about Using Projectors?

The one method I steer clear of is projection. I have an old overhead projector I used quite a bit before I learned more modern, efficient transfer methods. Projection is labor intensive, inaccurate, and often leads to stretched or distorted images. If you read older books on rugmaking, you might see projection listed as the best method, but techniques and tools always improve over time and there are many more accurate, faster methods available now.



If you want to make a circle, you don't begin with a central chain at all—you move right into making rounds.

Sizing and Shaping Your Rugs

If you already have a spot in mind for placing your next rag rug, you have probably already considered shape and size. A little bedside rug to save your feet from the cold floor will need to be a different shape and size from a rug that's meant to run the length of your upstairs hall. The round rug you'd love to create for the playroom will be executed in a very different way from your rectangular welcome mat. Always consider space constraints from the start and think carefully about the size and shape of rug you need to make—set yourself up for success rather than frustration.

Many styles of rag rugs are made using a backing (or foundation) fabric, including traditional hooked, proddy, latch hook, looped latch, locker hook, penny, traditional punch needle, and miniature punch needle pieces. Rather than growing your rug as you go, these forms are made on a foundation cloth you cut as desired. The size and shape of your backing dictates the size and shape of your finished rug.

Some rugs grow as you work, including braided, Amish toothbrush, and some forms of crocheted, penny, and quillie rugs. These rugs grow larger the longer you work and the more material you add. These are the rug styles that require some advanced thought regarding how to achieve the desired shape and size. It doesn't make them more difficult or challenging—it just means that rather than planning your final piece by cutting out backing fabric, you need to plan in a different way.

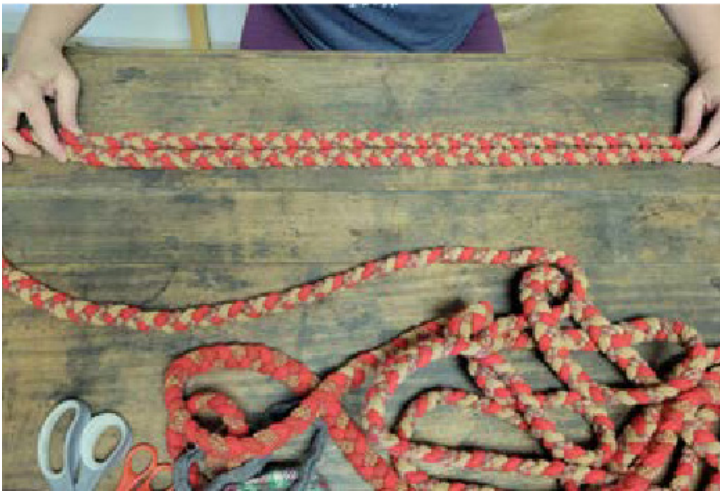
Rugs that are destined for traditional use, on the floor, usually have familiar shapes: rectangles, ovals, and circles. “Rugs” that are destined for the wall and meant to be viewed as textile art can take on any shape. Irregular “bohemian” creations that fly in the face of tradition are advanced forms you can experiment with and develop once you understand the principles of shape and size. As so many great artists have said, once you know the rules, you can break them.

CREATING OVALS AND CIRCLES

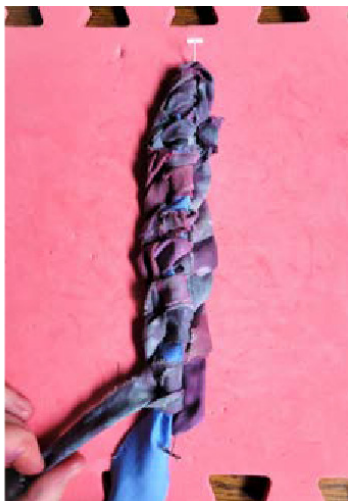
An oval rug has a central chain at the core. The final size and shape depend on the length of this all-important chain—will you create a long, skinny runner or a small, stout, pill-shaped rug?



A shorter central chain will turn into a shorter, fatter rug. You add material around this central section, and those rounds follow the proportions of the starting chain.



A longer central chain will turn into a longer, thinner rug. Each round will be longer, and you'll probably add fewer total rounds. If you add many rounds, you'll end up with a very long, very large rug.



No matter what technique you're using (here I'm working in the Amish toothbrush technique), your first links form a starting chain (left), and the first row runs parallel to this chain (right).

The size and shape of the final rug will always echo that central chain. I might start with 30 or 40 “units” if I’m making a holiday table runner, but for the upstairs hall I would start with 100 or more. As you experiment and practice, you’ll get a feel for how a shape evolves. The size and thickness of the material also affects the final size and shape. An Amish toothbrush rug using thinner cotton strips will not be the same size as a heavy wool braided rug begun with the same size starting chain.

CREATING RECTANGLES AND SQUARES

There are several ways you can make a rectangular or square rug. As you progress in skill and experience, you will be able to improvise a bit more, but in the beginning following set rules will help you better learn the techniques.



In this picture, I'm using my wooden needle to point out the loop on this end where I can add an extra stitch to create a squared center.



The extra stitch added on in this loop creates a squared shape.



When you come back around on the next round, you'll have two loops on top. You need to add an extra stitch to every loop on the top and bottom on every round.



Your goal is to fill out the top and bottom to keep them squared. Otherwise, the rug will become an oval.

When you are making an Amish toothbrush or braided rug and you want to create a rectangle rather than an oval, you need to add extra stitches (called increases) at the top and bottom “corners” of your chain.

You start your chain as usual. After you complete the chain and the first row, if you continue working down the side without adding any extra stitches, you’ll create an oval. If you make more stitches in the top and in the bottom, you’ll square off the central shape.

Every time you work a round, you need to add more extra stitches

to the top and bottom to continue to create the squared shape. This is one way to create a square or rectangle shape—by adding volume to the top and bottom as you grow your rug.



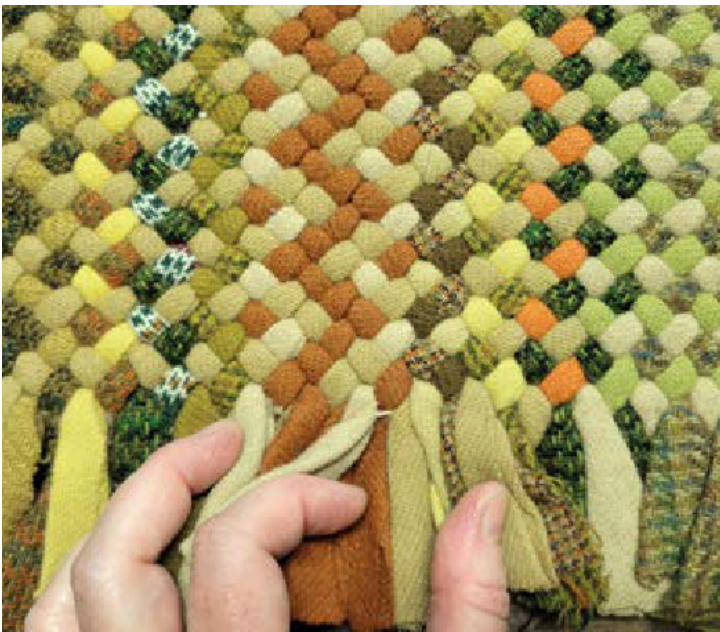
In this close-up, the arrows show where I made two stitches each (one regular stitch and one extra stitch) into each of the two top loops.



An alternative method involves making a very long chain (like the one shown) and lacing (sewing) it as you form the rug, manipulating it with your hands to create the desired shape.



Rugmakers use heavy or waxed threads when lacing together the pieces of a rug in this way.



Row-by-row rugs need stitching (hidden in this example) to prevent the braids from unraveling and keep the tassel edges tidy.

If you want a perfect square, rather than a rectangle, start with a circular coil instead of a longer thin chain, then add extra stitches to the “corners” in the same way. These stitches will become increases just like in a rectangular rug, forming the four corners. Some people sew their rugs by hand while others use their sewing machine’s zigzag stitch. Always pin as you go and manipulate the chain at the corners to add volume.

You can also create a collection of individual chains or braids of the same length and sew them together by hand or with your sewing machine along the long edges. This technique gives you the freedom to play with color and plan your rug by experimenting with different chain placements until you like the composition. Be sure to hand or machine stitch the sides, as well, so that your chain or braid won’t unravel.

CHAPTER 4



Color Planning and Dyeing

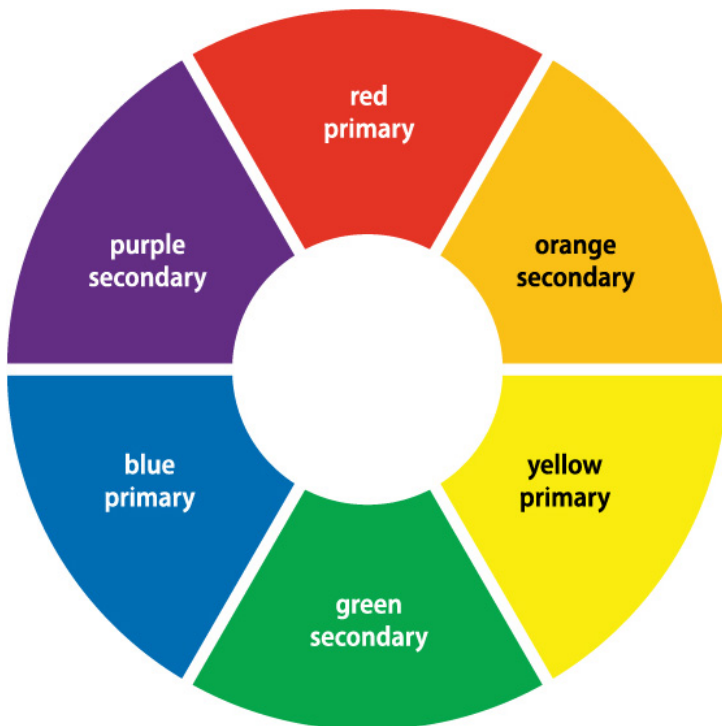
A knowledge of the color wheel and color theory will really help you feel confident with your color planning choices. Once you learn the rules, be open to breaking them if you want to use other colors in a piece. Whether your colors traditionally “go together” or not—if you like how they look, try them!



The Color Wheel and Color Theory

You've probably seen the color wheel in various art classes throughout your life. The color wheel is the basis for color theory, and it's worth studying. Knowing the relationships between primary, secondary, and tertiary colors can help you when you least expect it.

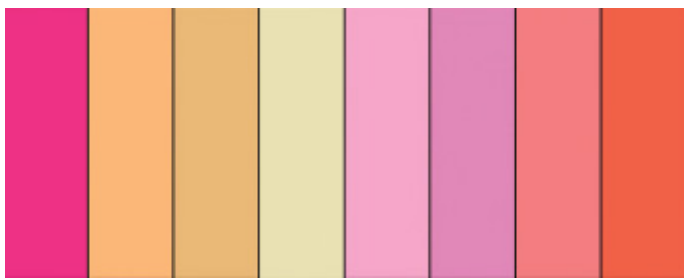
Although I am a huge proponent of simply choosing your favorite colors, when colors truly work together, they pop. That “pop” is usually caused by color wheel concepts. You can enhance your favorite color by using its complementary color (the color opposite to it on the color wheel). It's like a harmony added to the melody—they work together to make each other more beautiful. Even just a small amount of the right color can give your piece that certain *je ne sais quoi*.



The color wheel is a great reference and the perfect starting point for color planning.

EXAMPLE COLOR COMBINATIONS

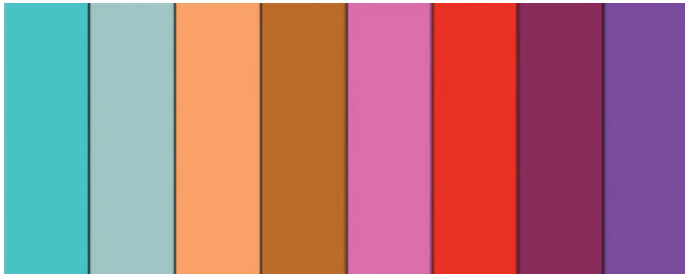
The following example palettes will more clearly illustrate these color relationships. They're just like any other relationships—sometimes great, sometimes abysmal, and sometimes they create magic. Palettes can convey the feeling of the groovy 1970s or the tubular 1980s. Palettes can follow any theme you can think of—you can capture the colors of flowers in your garden, your favorite beach towels, or the shades a banana turns as it ripens.



This palette shows a combination of warm colors—reds, oranges, and yellows, but it doesn't only include the basic shades. Warm color options range from persimmon, salmon, and raspberry to straw, antique gold, peach, etc. Any shades of red, orange, and yellow can fit into warm color palettes.



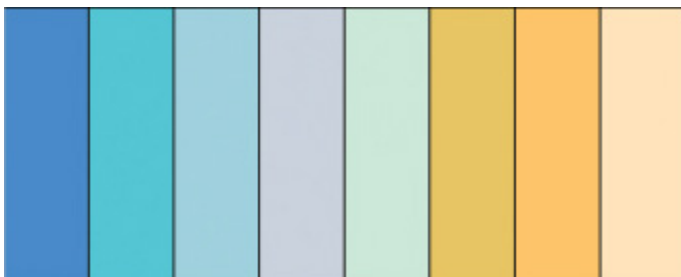
This cool color palette likewise presents the infinite variety of blues, greens, and purples. Lilac, steel blue, pistachio, spearmint, celery, grape jam—the color wheel becomes much more exciting when you think about all the in-between shades.



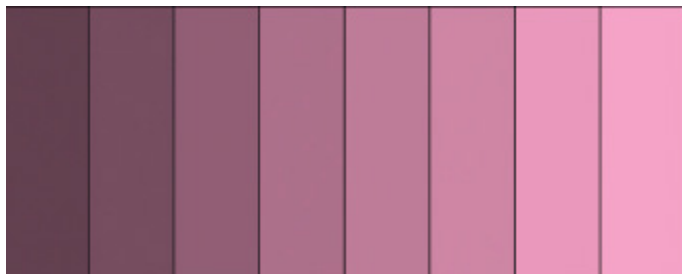
You can also mix warm and cool colors! This particular mix of colors might not be pleasing to everyone, but I love it. Don't let anybody overpower your style—let your own color sense shine through.



This palette shows a group of neutral shades that will mix well with most colors. Depending on who you talk to, the main neutrals are browns, grays, black, and white. I consider the darkest values of all colors (like navy and eggplant, for example) to be interchangeable with neutrals, and I use them that way in my work.



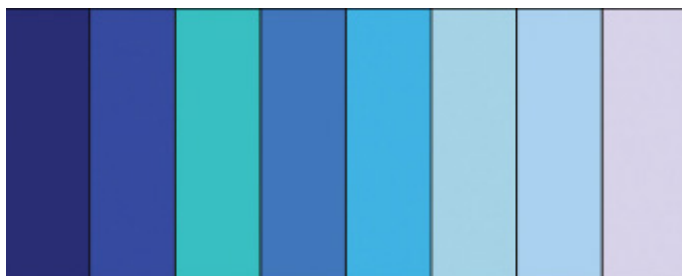
Colors that are opposite each other on the color wheel are called complementary colors because they intensify each other. This swatch set shows you complementary blue and orange. No matter which shades you choose, this combination will always work.



This swatch set is monochromatic, but also demonstrates an ombre effect—when a single color moves through shades from a very light value to a very dark value. You can use multiple values of the same color to create shading or patterns.



Like the darkest shades, super-light shades also work as neutrals within your finished piece.



Monochromatic colors are all in the same color family, in this case blue. Even working within a single color family, you have a huge number of options. Blues range from true blues to green-tinted teals to purplish periwinkles, with all the light and dark shades in between.



Once you understand color theory, you can mix and match colors as you please. This unusual palette is a historic one—these are colors that were popular in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

DARK, LIGHT, DULL, BRIGHT

Dark, light, dull, bright is a trick for color planning that will make your compositions pop. The idea is to include a dark, a light, a dull, and a bright color. Picture the Egyptian wing of a museum with all of its drab earthy colors and dark, flat charcoal shades. Throughout you'll find light ochres, bright turquoises, corals, and glittering golds. The best art throughout the ages incorporates, consciously or not, the concept of DLDB.



Dark, light, dull, bright (DLDB) is a foolproof method of color planning. In this example, the eggplant color (lower left) is dark, the cotton candy pink (top right)

is light, the army drab (lower right) is dull, and the neon orange (top left) is bright. Whether you like this palette or not, you can see how the principle works.

Creating Your Own Colors

Many rug makers become deeply involved in the complete process, some even acquiring sheep or goats and spinning their own wool yarn. Dyeing is an integral part of the fiber art process that many makers enjoy. It allows more control of your finished piece, and even more opportunities for creative expression.



This yarn series I dyed was based on my love for Fiestaware®.



I always create swatch cards when I dye. I write the color recipes on the back (and record them in my phone) so I can consistently recreate the same colors.



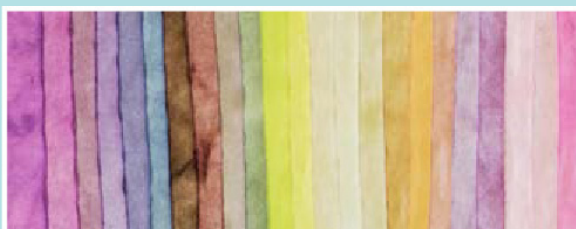
Vintage white enamel baby bathtubs can be expensive and difficult to find, but they are the best tools for the job. The colors (in this case my daughter's signature *Pumpkin Pie*) are much easier to see than they would be in a silvered pan.

Finding Dye Inspiration

Dye inspiration, like color planning inspiration, can come from unexpected places. The resulting materials can often have a theme that inspires an entire rug design!



Sometimes the dyed fabric inspires the final rug design—the ice cream inspiration resulted in my popular *Ice Cream Cone-ucopia* pattern—a riff on the traditional cornucopia patterns often seen in rug hooking. This version was hooked by my friend Jody Cousins of Wyoming.



I was inspired to capture summertime ice cream flavors in colored fabric by my daughter's soda jerk tap recital costume. The fabrics are all named for ice cream flavors, like butter brickle and black raspberry, as well.

USING CHEMICAL DYES

Dyeing with chemical dyes is my personal favorite. The resulting colors are bold, distinct, reliable, and repeatable. When you use chemical dyes, you need to designate a set of pots and kitchen tools that you use solely for dyeing, never for food preparation. Chemical dyes are easy to handle and lovely to work with, but toxic to ingest.

1. SOAK YOUR MATERIALS. When dyeing natural fibers with chemical dyes, it's best to soak them first. Put the material (wools, cottons, natural yarns, or silks) into a plastic tub filled with water and a small amount of Synthrapol (a soaking accelerant). Some people use Jet-Dry® instead of Synthrapol—it works the same way. Soak fabric yardage for an hour and yarns for a bit less time.

2. HEAT THE WATER. Chemical dye colors are set in the fabric with heat. Most people use pots and pans on the stovetop to achieve that heat, some people prefer a microwave, and some people solely use mason jars set out in the sun for a few days. I add water to designated pans and place them on the stove. As my materials near the end of the soaking cycle, I begin heating up the water.

3. ADD THE CITRIC ACID. Once the water in the pots is hot and ready for the fabric, I sprinkle citric acid into the water and set the burners to the highest heat. The water doesn't need to be boiling, but you should see some steaming and bubbling.

4. ADD THE DYE. Always use a mask and gloves when handling powder chemical dyes so you don't ingest any airborne particles. Once the powder is mixed with the liquid, you can remove your mask. I add the dye with measuring spoons set aside for this purpose, but you can easily use any designated tool or even sprinkle the dye in with a gloved hand.

5. ADD THE FABRIC AND SOAK. Drop your fabric into the pot and let the dye set. If it doesn't seem like the material is taking enough of the dye, sprinkle in more citric acid and turn the heat up. Stir or not based on the type of effect you want to create. The water in your pan will turn clear once

the dye has fully set in the fabric or yarn.



I use Synthrapol, citric acid, and powder dyes to customize my fabric colors.



This set of fabrics I dyed for Ribbon Candy Hooking was inspired by Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The colors are not quite solid because I did not stir the fabric in the dye. I let it sit, and the dye settled in certain spots, creating this mottled effect.



This set of dyed fabric (called *Provincetown Pride*) has more solid colors. When I dropped the fabric into the pan of dye, I stirred it constantly to keep the fabric and dye moving. The color set evenly because of the constant motion.

USING NATURAL DYES

I love using natural dyes because it makes me feel like a skilled gardener and forager and connects me with my romantic ideas about Colonial America and harvests—all the things I don't know much about but view as mysterious and intriguing.

I love buying my natural dyes from Anita at Walnut Hill Farm in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. Her colors are beautiful, dependable, and safe to use with any kitchen set up. You can blend and make recipes with natural dyes the same way you would with chemical dyes.



I colored these small yarn samples with natural dyes, including lac, Himalayan rhubarb, cochineal beetles, curcumin extract, and mulberry leaf.



Whole cochineal beetles



Marigolds



Sandalwood powder



Logwood chip shavings



Acacia wattle extract

It's amazing what can be used to create dyes. Flowers, wood chips, and even beetles can be used to create beautiful colors.

PHOTOS COURTESY WALNUT FARM DESIGNS OF CARLISLE, PENNSYLVANIA.

[HTTPS://WALNUTFARMDESIGNS.COM](https://walnutfarmdesigns.com) AND [HTTPS://WWW.ETSY.COM/SHOP/WALNUTFARMDESIGNS](https://www.etsy.com/shop/walnutfarmdesigns)

Forage, Grow, or Buy Natural Dyes

The colors you can create by foraging are contingent on what is available in your region in a given season. You can also try planting your own dye garden, but it can take several years for a dye garden to really get going. For those who love foraging or gardening, both methods are definitely worth the time, but if that isn't you, there's no shame in buying the supplies you need to create beautiful, natural colors!

USING KITCHEN COLORS

If you are coloring natural fibers like wool, cotton, or silk there are already a lot of items in your kitchen pantry, like food coloring, Kool-Aid® and other drink mixes, Jell-O® mixes, and egg dyeing kits, that can get you started. The resulting colors will be bright, although they won't have the intensity or lasting power of a chemical dye. The dyes in these food products are nontoxic, however, so you won't need to invest in a second set of pots and pans, casserole dishes, stirring spoons, or measuring spoons.



The egg coloring sets you can find in grocery or dollar stores around Easter can be used to dye fabrics, as well!



Liquid and gel food dyes are fantastic for dying yarns. Wear gloves to protect your hands and work the dyes into the yarn or fabric on a surface such as an enamel sheet pan.

SPOT DYEING

Spot dyeing is a fun, controlled way to add color. I often dye my material a single color, then decide I want to add more color. Spot dyeing can be as simple as dripping food coloring or spooning mixed dyes directly onto your material or sprinkling powder dye on top with a gloved hand.

The easiest tools to use for spot dyeing are clear squirt bottles (also called applicator bottles since they're often used by hair stylists to apply hair dyes). Scoop dye powder into the bottle and pour in warm (not boiling) water. The water must be warm rather than boiling

because the plastic used to make the bottles won't hold up to very high temperatures. You can use bottles to squirt the color into a pan of water to create watercolor effects or squirt the colors directly onto your material.

I spot dye in casserole dishes and large baking sheets that I use only for that purpose. Once you've applied your spot color with the method you prefer, you must heat the material to set it. I prefer setting my spot-dyed materials in the oven at 120°F (48.9°C). Make sure your material is a little bit damp so it doesn't burn and sprinkle citric acid on top to help the color set.



This set of dyed fabrics (called *Cape Cod*) is spot dyed, meaning I applied color in spots using squirt bottles or spoons full of liquid dye.



If you end up with leftover dye in your squirt bottle, just put the cap back on and save it for next time. When you go to reuse a bottle, always test it on a paper towel first to make sure you are using the correct color.



Squirt bottles can be used to add stripes and other patterns to pre-dyed wool and fabrics.



The same tie-dye techniques you'd use to jazz up a T-shirt (tying the fabric with elastic bands and squirting dye onto the bundle) will also work for customizing your rug-making materials, too.



The best way to dry spot-dyed materials is outside on racks. During winter or bad weather, an indoor drying rack and a fan will do the trick.

SILK TRANSFER DYEING

You can dye fabrics without using actual dyes by transferring patterns from silks (I often use silk ties) to wool. Prepare the materials first by soaking the wool and cutting the tie apart to remove the lining.



You can transfer patterns from silk to wool—no dyes needed!



1. Place the silk on top of the wool with the right side down.



2. Roll the two fabrics together tightly and tie the package with twine, elastic, or zip ties (whatever you might have on hand).



3. Drop the roll into a pan of hot water (it doesn't need to be boiling). Add citric acid to help the process (optional). If the roll keeps floating to the surface, you can weigh it down with a rock or similar object.



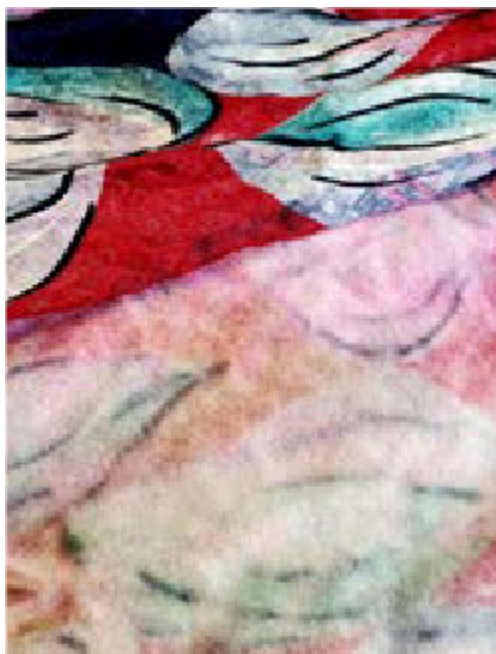
4. The package will change color as the dyes from the silk tie transfer to the wool. When the fabric looks saturated, remove it from the pot.

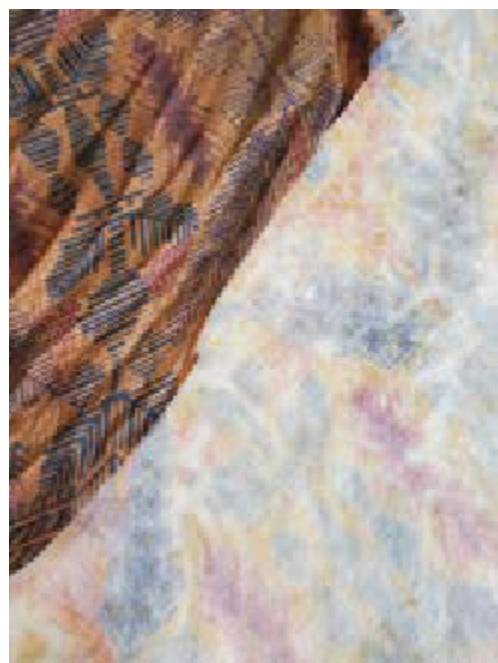
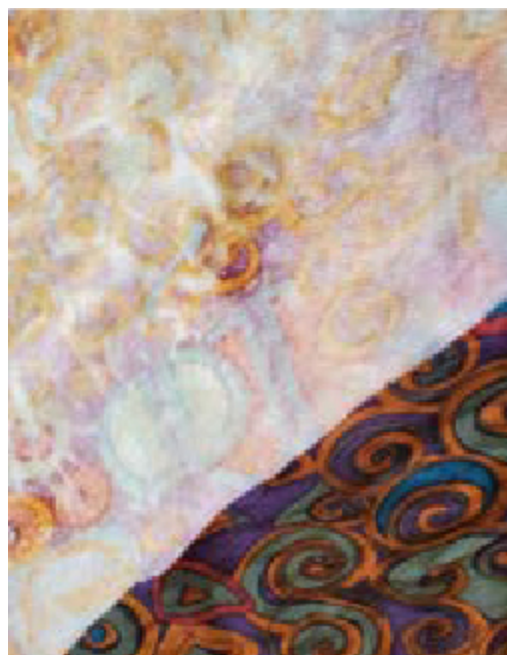


5. Cut off the twine and unroll the package.



6. Remove the silk layer to reveal the pattern transferred to the wool.







Silk transfer dyeing also works with scarves, saris, or anything silk. It is not an exact science, so the results are unpredictable and sometimes disappointing. These unknowns, however, are what make this process so fun and exciting and what makes a great result feel so rewarding.

Sometimes silk pattern transfers turn out great, sometimes they don't—through no fault on your part. Different dyes used in silk ties produce different results.



I often create patterned wool for traditional rug hooking with this silk transfer dyeing method. It produces beautiful, unique materials to work with.

Silk Transfer Dyeing Tips

- Always keep an eye on the water. You'll be surprised how often pink and red dyes are present even in ties that look entirely brown or green. If your water is overrun with a pink color you weren't trying to achieve, empty the water, refill the pot with clear water, turn the heat up again, and keep going.
- Remember that this is a form of chemical dyeing. Garment dyes are chemical dyes. So, while you are not introducing powder dyes, you are still using chemicals. Use your designated dyeing pots and pans for this method, too.

CHAPTER 5

Techniques and Projects

In this chapter, we'll walk through 12 popular, gorgeous thrifty rug-making techniques from the past. Each section includes a bit of history, some tips to help you make the most of each technique, and step-by-step instructions on exactly how to make each type of rug. I've also created practice projects you can use to familiarize yourself with each process and perfect your skills. As you become more and more comfortable with the techniques, you can begin to use them in creating your own stunning designs.



The Crocheted Rug



The Proddy Rug



The Amish Toothbrush Rug



The Quillie Rug



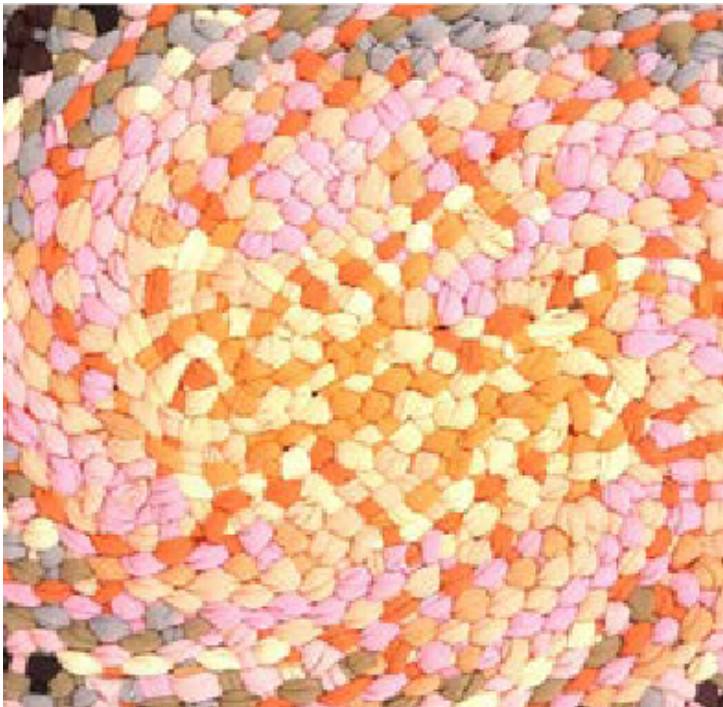
The Locker Hooked Rug



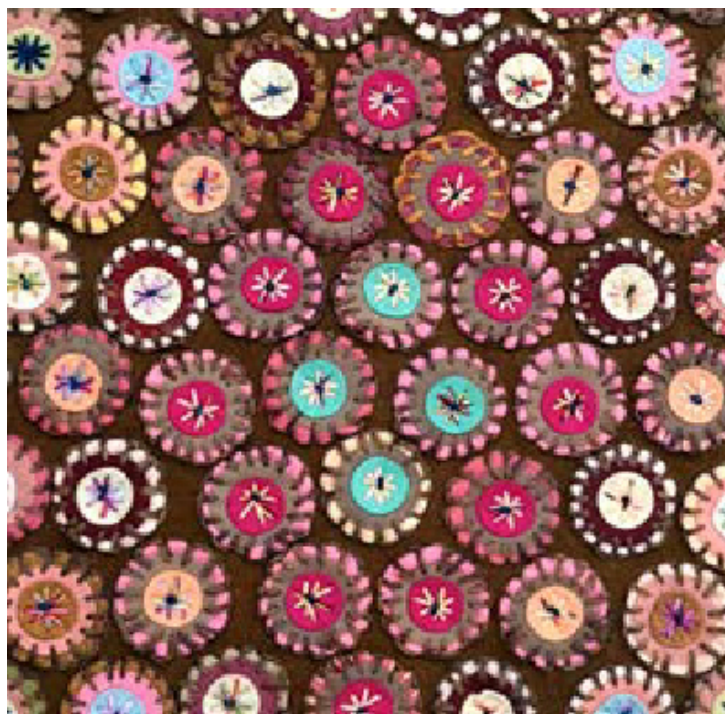
The Traditional Hooked Rug



The Looped Latch Rug



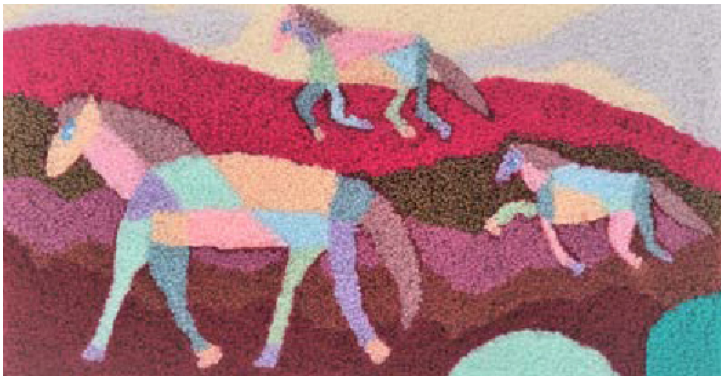
The Braided Rug



Penny Rugs



Traditional Punch Needle



Miniature Punch Needle



The oatch Hook Rug

THE AMISH TOOTHBRUSH RUG

Practice Project:

THE PAINTED DESERT

In this section, I'll walk you through a brief history of the classic Amish toothbrush rug, then I'll show you all the tips and tricks you need to get started. I've also included a general step-by-step guide for the Amish toothbrush technique. Follow the technique step-by-step as written to create The Painted Desert practice project. Once you're comfortable with the technique, use it to create your own rug designs.

I was lucky with this rug—I found a ton of thrifted, hand-dyed batiks that made me think of spices, gemstones, and faraway places. I named my finished piece The Painted Desert in honor of all the Western bus tours I used to host and the poetic views I saw along the way.



Finished dimensions: 27" x 21" (68.6 x 53.3cm)

Tools and Materials

- Toothbrush needle
- 9 yds. (8.2m) fabric cut or torn into strips
- Scissors
- 12 safety pins, clips, or clothespins (to use as markers)



This colorful Amish toothbrush rug was made by Margaret Risner of Rag Rug Road (<https://www.etsy.com/shop/RagRugRoad>). Margaret's shop is filled with tutorials for creating cheerful rugs.

BACKGROUND

This fun, simple rug technique has one of the strangest names in the craft kingdom. Years ago, all toothbrushes had holes and a brilliant crafter had the bright idea to cut the bristle head off and file the end to create a dull, thick needle. This repurposed toothbrush was a wonderful tool with a large eye perfect for working with fabric strips. This was a smart innovation by an anonymous contributor to the history of rugmaking.

The word “Amish” is often attached to any “traditional” handicraft, and it can be misleading. In this case, the stitch used to make the entire rug is actually a blanket stitch. This rug has been called the “Amish knot,” the “Amish toothbrush,” the “toothbrush,” and the “Navajo knot.” The history is murky at best and it’s likely a hybrid that appeared in the early twentieth century. The Amish toothbrush is thought to be an American invention without any other roots. This one-stitch wonder presents a lot of possibilities in terms of design and color, and the single stitch employed in the making creates the signature look of this style.



Amish toothbrush rugs are made by using a special wooden toothbrush needle to easily create blanket stitches with strips of fabric.

PREPPING YOUR FABRIC STRIPS

This is a technique that involves two strips—a runner strip and a working strip. You constantly loop the working strip over the runner strip (creating stitches), while the runner strip stays in place. The Amish toothbrush is one of those rugs that looks great even if it's made with ripped-up bedsheets and cottons.

It's worth thinking about the look you want as you prepare your fabric strips because your rug will create a pattern as you spiral out from the center. For *The Painted Desert*, the example practice project on here, I used a huge mix of batiks I had left over from my quilting days. I chose them because batik fabrics (like Kona cottons) are colorful on both sides. With this technique your material twists and flips, so one-sided prints can be frustrating to use.

Most makers like to prep all their material first so they won't be interrupted in the flow of making by having to cut or rip new fabric strips. Once your fabric strips are cut, it's best to roll them into individual balls without joining them.

I am not a super tidy rugmaker—I love a rug that's a bit rough around the edges—so I rarely color plan Amish toothbrush rugs. If you want to be more thoughtful about the colors you use, think about how the runner strip colors work with the working strip colors. Depending on how wide you cut your strips, you often see a bit of the runner strip showing through between the stitches (creating a pattern). If you use a

dark runner strip and light working strips throughout (or vice versa) you will create a distinct pattern.

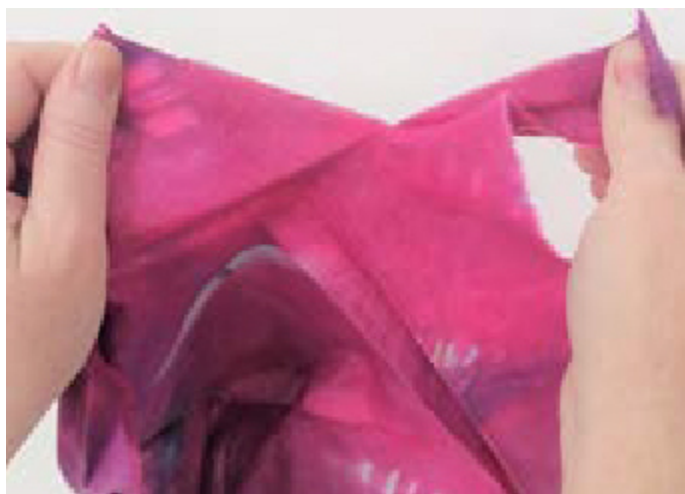
Also think about whether you want color changes (which create stripes as the rug grows). You can decide on color changes as you work, as well, once you see how the rug is developing. You can also switch out both your runner strips and your working strips at any point in your project. If you make a dramatic color change toward the end, you'll end up with a lovely border stripe.



These are the fabrics I used for The Painted Rug, the practice project on here.

Tip:

Store-bought cottons, unlike fabrics that have been washed 100 times, end up with many annoying strings along the edges when you rip them. Try trimming these as you work or folding the sides of your strips under as you might with a quilt binding.



I create fabric strips by first snipping the edge of the fabric, then ripping the fabric apart at the cut.



The T-shirt material strips I'm working with here are about 1" (2.5cm) wide (2" [5.1cm] is a more common measurement). Because the working strip is thin, it's possible to see the lighter pink runner strip in between the stitches (creating a nice pattern).



This rug features very wide cotton strips. Because the working strip is wider, the runner strip is hidden underneath.

JOINING NEW STRIPS WITH THE BOW TIE JOIN

Many types of rag rug making involve adding new material while you work. You couldn't possibly work with an infinite strip—you'd just end up with an impossible tangle. My favorite way of connecting more material to strips as you work is to make a bow tie join. The bow tie join is also used to connect your runner strip to your working strip when you first start a rug.



1. Hold the ends of the two strips you will be joining.





2. Snip a small vertical cut about $\frac{1}{2}$ " (1.3cm) from the ends of both strips. This cut only has to be large enough for a strip to pass through. Too large and you risk ripping the strip as you work.



3. Pull the strip you're joining through the cut on the strip that just ran out (the

strip still attached to the rug).



4. Take the other end of the new strip and feed it through the cut on the end you just fed through the strip you're attaching to. **Note:** I already cut the other end of the new strip in this example, but you don't have to cut it until you need to attach another new strip.



5. Pull each strip carefully so they slide into place.



6. The finished knot looks like a little bow tie.

TIPS BEFORE YOU BEGIN

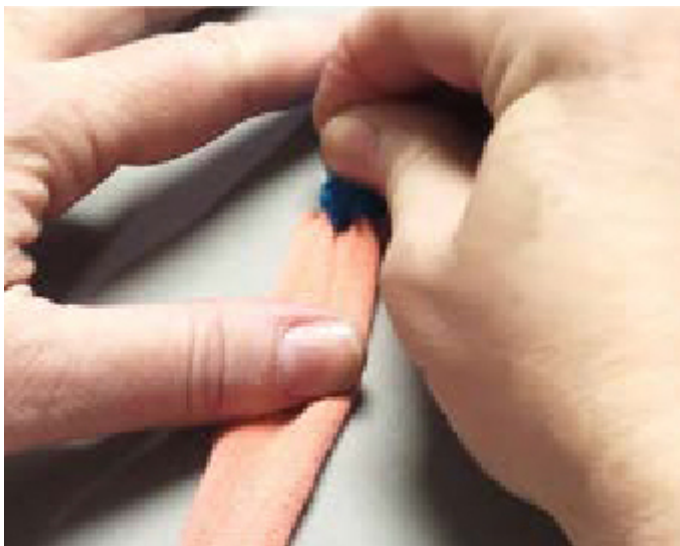
Work Flat at First—Unless you are a seasoned maker who can go through the motions of making an Amish toothbrush rug in your sleep, it's very hard to keep the tension even and the stitches pretty unless you're working flat. I've seen a lot of people work from start to finish on their laps and this style of working is fine once you've really mastered the technique, but it's very hard for beginners.

Anchor Your Rug—It's very hard for beginners to work on a table without anchoring the project as they go. The beginning of this rug (the first two rounds or core) is very tricky, but once you're past those first rounds it becomes very robotic and mechanical.

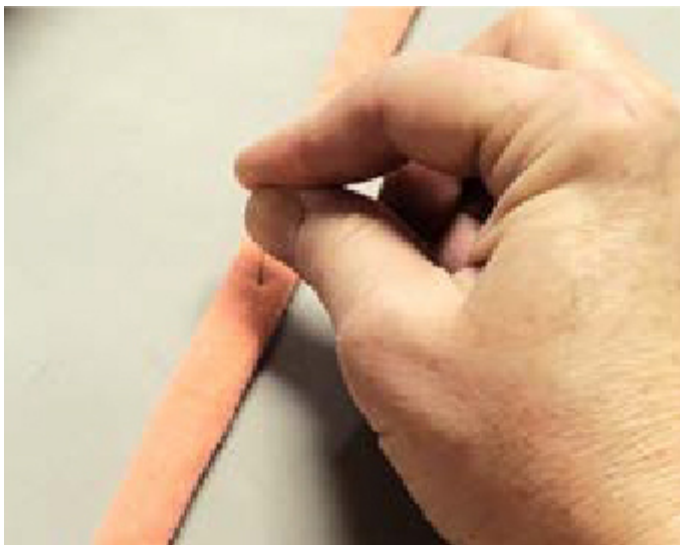
Tip:

Try starting with your two strands held under the clip of a clipboard to keep them in place. Then use mini craft clips to mark where you need to place any increase stitches.

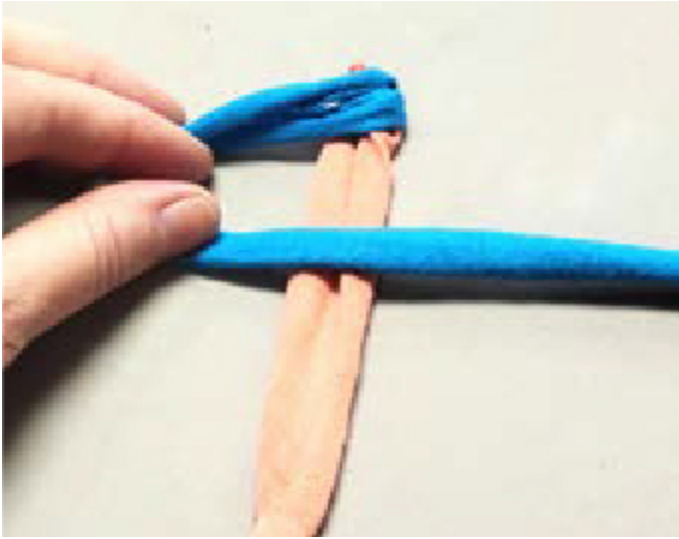
Pin as You Work—Pinning anchors your piece to your working surface during the early stages so it won't shift or become uneven. If your first stitches are uneven, and you continue working with an imperfect core, everything else will be uneven. Use straight pins to pin the piece as you work. You can pin to wool quilting or pressing mats, ironing boards, corkboards, interlocking foam tiles, or anything similar.



I start my rugs by pinning the knot from my first bow tie join (which joins the runner strip to the working strip) to the top of my surface.



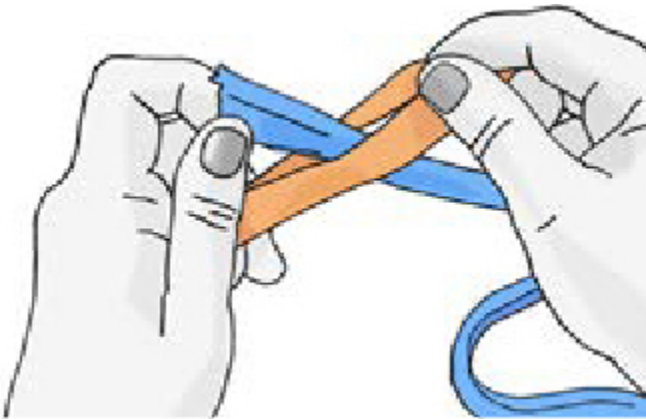
I hold my runner strip still by placing my foot on the end, but I also pin it to keep it flat.



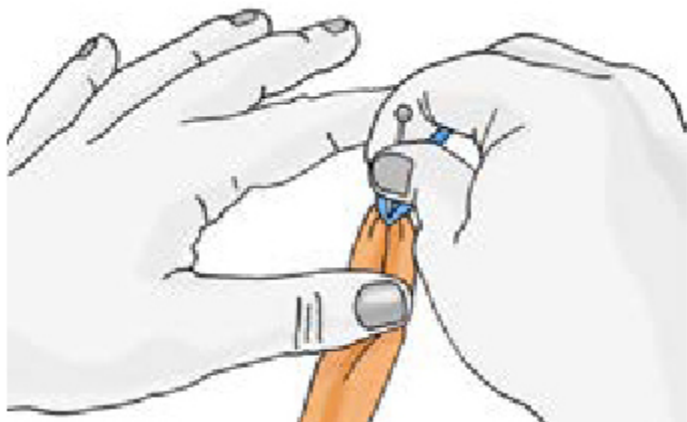
With my pins in place, I can confidently start making the rug's core.

HOW TO MAKE AN AMISH TOOTHBRUSH RUG

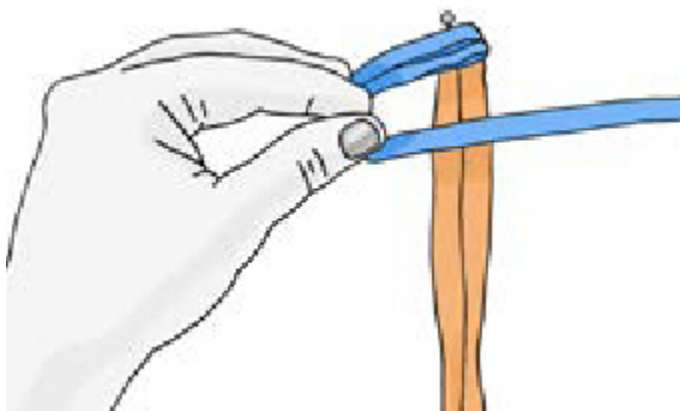
Make the Base Chain



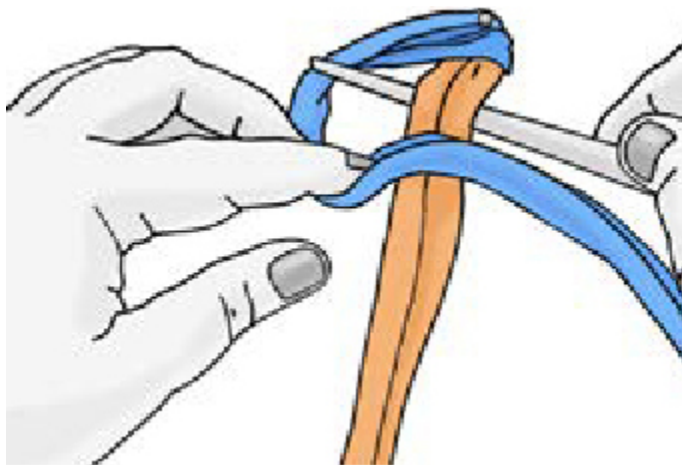
1. Attach your runner strip and your working strip by using a bow tie join (see [here](#)). **Alternative:** Sew the ends of the strips together if you prefer.



2. Pin the connecting knot (or sewn connection) in place to keep it from moving. Hold the runner taut and flat by pinning it and placing your foot on top. Make sure your runner strip is on the left and your working strip is on the right.



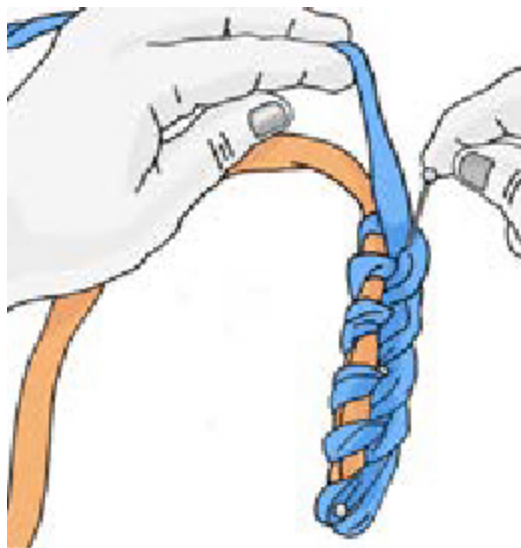
3. Cross the working strip over the runner strip, making a sideways *U* shape.



4. Hold the *U* in place and thread the working strip under the runner strip and up through the *U*. Pull it snug.



5. Repeat to create the links for the central core. The number of links you make will be based on the size of the rug you want to make.



6. Once your central core is complete, turn the piece upside down and pin it in place. Move the runner strip and working strip to the left side of the core, with the runner strip flush against the core and the working strip on the outside.



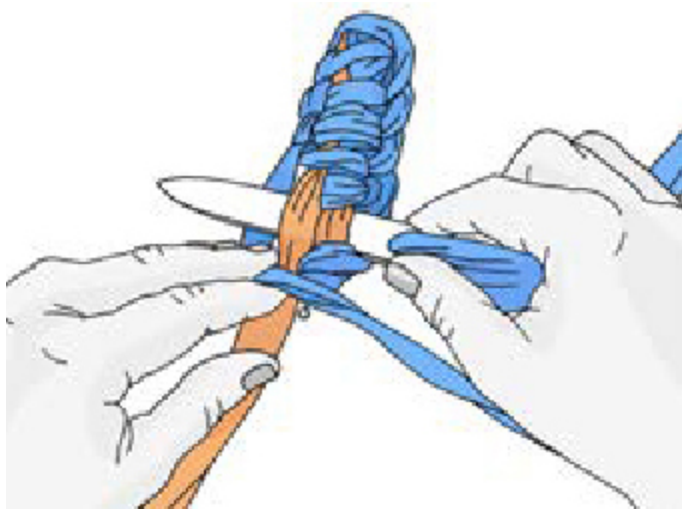
7. Cross the working strip over the runner strip and the core, making a sideways *U* shape. Hold the *U* in place and thread the working strip under the core and the runner strip and up through the *U*. Pull it snug.

You will use the same stitch the whole way around the rug, adding increases at the top and bottom (multiple stitches made in a single hole to create ease) to keep your rug from cupping or becoming distorted. Each time you pass the needle through, your working stitch will wrap over the top, just as it did when creating the core. Adjust your tension and spacing as you work.

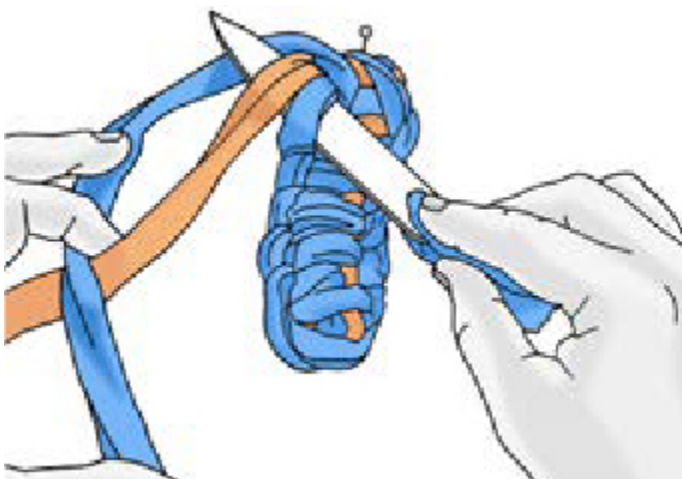


Adding increases may seem intimidating at first, but if you remember to repeat all your stitches and follow the diagram on here, you'll have great success!

ROUND ONE



1. Finish the row of stitches to complete the base chain. You should be back at the start. Make three stitches in the top loop to begin round one.



2. Continue making stitches down the side, then make three stitches in the top loop at the other end.

Tip:

Use craft clips or clothespins to help you remember where your top and bottom loops are. Keep extra clips handy for when the spacing

of the increase stitches changes.



Round Two

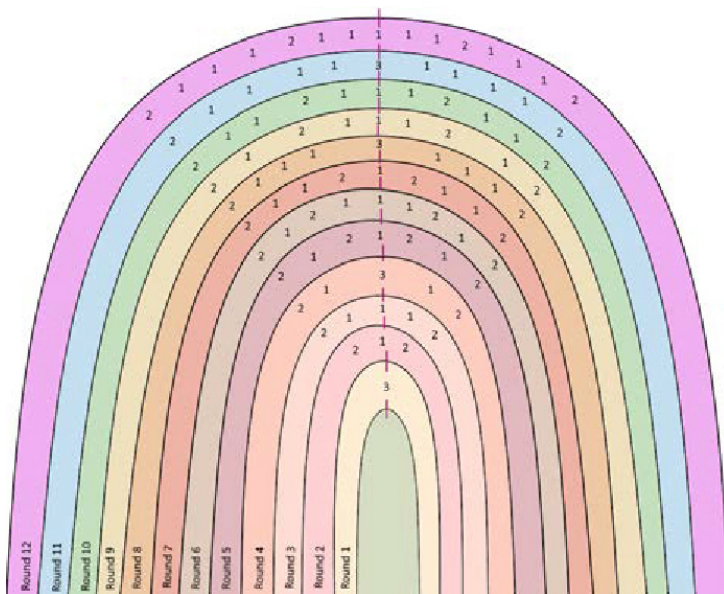
1. Add stitches along the side to complete round one. Once you reach the end, make two stitches in the first loop, one stitch in the middle (top) loop, and two stitches in the last loop to begin round two.
2. Continue adding stitches to the following side, then repeat the pattern of stitches from step 1 (two stitches, one stitch, two stitches). Add stitches along the side to complete round two.

Round Three and Beyond

For all remaining rounds, continue to work stitches down the sides, adding increase stitches to the curves as shown in the diagram on the right. You will fan these increase stitches out so that you evenly add volume without creating a ruffle.

Tip:

Avoid placing an even number of stitches in the middle/top stitch. If you do, on your next round, you'll have no middle stitch to work with, making your final shape asymmetrical.



This diagram of one end of an Amish toothbrush rug shows the pattern of increase stitches needed for each round. The dotted red line indicates the location of the top loop, and the numbers show how many stitches are added and where they occur within each round.

Final Round

For the final round, do a single stitch in every hole with no increases. This finishes the rug with a very uniform look.

Tip:

Stand back and look at your rug before you finish off to make sure the symmetry is balanced and you're happy with the final shape.

Finishing Off



1. When you are ready to finish the rug, cut the runner strip and working strip to 5" (12.7cm) long.



2. Weave the two tails into the back of the rug, making sure they are hidden so you can display and use either side of the rug.

Is This Rug Washable?

This is always a question with all handmade rugs. It's usually

sufficient to vacuum and shake out rag rugs, and sometimes you might need to spot clean. With an Amish toothbrush rug, if you intend to wash it in a washing machine at any point, prewash the materials before you create the rug. Hang Amish toothbrush rugs to dry to keep the shape from becoming distorted.

Sometimes it's hard to tell the content of your fabrics, especially when you pick things up at thrift shops. If you're not sure about fabric content, don't machine wash. If you are certain it's all the same fabric and it's been prewashed, it's fine to put a smaller rug in the washing machine on a gentle cycle with gentle soap. Don't put a larger rug in the washing machine because it might throttle the agitator and create a very expensive problem.

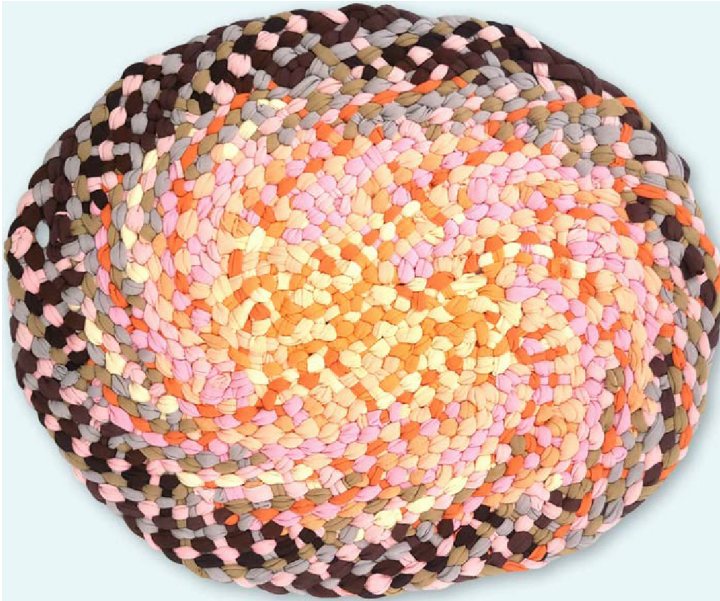
THE BRAIDED RUG

Practice Project:

SUNRISE SWIRL

Braiding is one of the most approachable rag rug techniques. In this section, I'll walk you through a brief history of braided rugs and explore the different types of braiding and the ways the different techniques differ. I've also included a general step-by-step guide for the braided rug technique. Follow the technique step-by-step as written to create the Sunrise Swirl practice project. Once you're comfortable with the technique, use it to create your own rug designs.

Braided-in rugs made with more than three strands look complex but are actually simple and quick to work up. Because this design braids into itself, you don't need to worry about lacing—Sunrise Swirl neatly finishes itself.



Finished dimensions: 26" x 21" (66 x 53.3cm)

Tools and Materials

- Fabric cut into strips (1 yd. [91.4cm] for every square foot)
- Scissors
- A clamp or binder clip
- 16 plastic craft needles with large eyes or large safety pins, like diaper pins
- Pins, clips, or clothespins (to use as markers)

BACKGROUND

The braided rug is one of the most familiar and recognizable forms of rag rug there is. They create a sense of mellow charm and coziness and a feeling of welcome just sitting at the front door. Braided rugs also present fun little mysteries. Are those little chips of navy blue from an old school uniform and the flecks of mustard gold from a winter blanket that warmed the foot of the bed for decades? Are the glimpses

of pink and purple someone's once-prized Easter coat? It creates a mixed sense of tradition and romance.

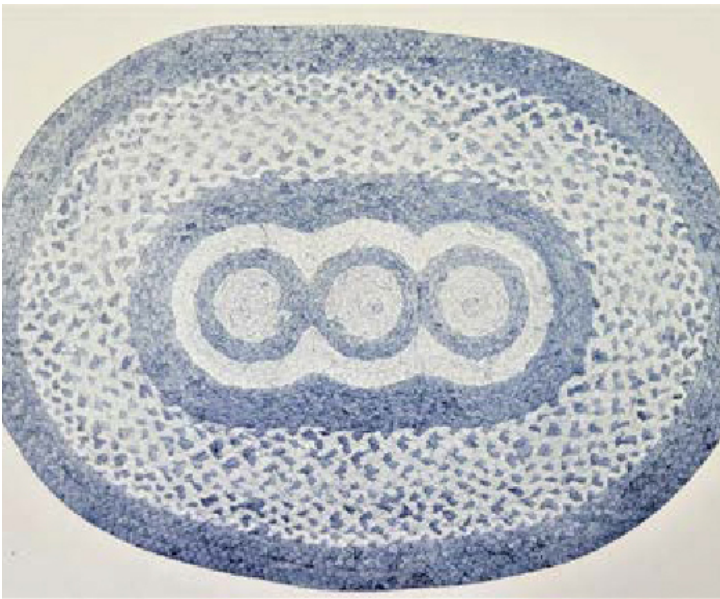
While braiding is an ancient art, rug braiding is regarded as an American craft. The first rugs were ovals made from a single run of braided fabric. We tend to associate braided rugs with life in Early America, but that is not at all accurate. Rugs were actually extremely rare in Colonial America—it was far more likely to have dirt floors or a layer of rushes rather than rugs or carpets. Braided rugs aren't mentioned in records until the 1820s. The Colonial Revival movement in America, a style of architecture and decoration inspired by the country's history and a "simpler time," made homemade rugs very popular, however, and braided rugs fit with this new aesthetic. The Industrial Revolution and the Cooperative Extension Act also helped make braided rugs more prevalent—it was easier to source the large quantities of fabric required for their construction, and the educational provisions of the act led to many women learning the craft.



This impressive 70" (1.8m) round braided rug was made by Mildred Hazel Wright Phillips in Southampton, Massachusetts, in the late 1960s. It's a perfect example of the old rule of matching solid-colored wool with patterned wool in every braid.



There is such understated poetry in a braided rug, a story of dozens of hours of quiet, contemplative work. I found this one in an antiques shop in Plymouth, Massachusetts. It's made up of a series of chains that are stitched together.

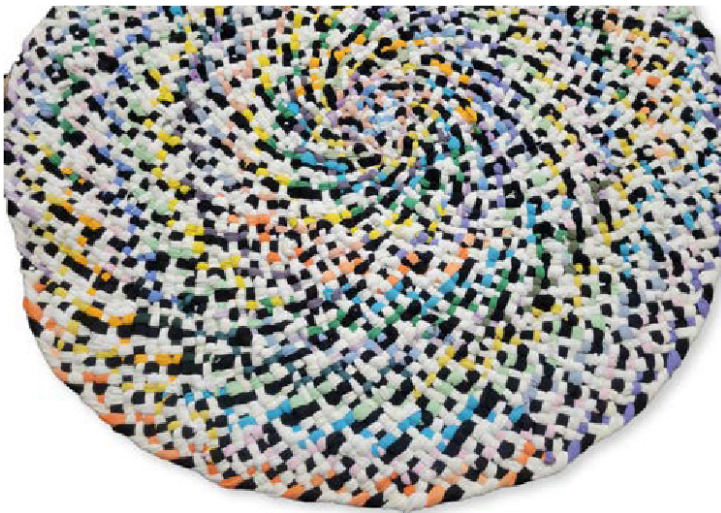


Many vintage patterns featured beautiful, intricate designs with multiple rounds incorporated into a larger rug and were called evocative names like "The Three

Sisters” or “Wagon Wheels.” They often included little instruction on the actual making of the rug.

TYPES OF BRAIDING

Three-Strand Braids—The basic mechanics of braiding are very simple: you take three strands of material and alternate moving the left and right outer strands to the center position. In its most basic form, makers create a single long three-strand braid and lace (sew) that braid to itself to create a rug. Braids can also be connected using a zigzag stitch on your sewing machine.



This beautiful four-strand rug by Anne Trotter really shows off the spiral flower that evolves when you make a rug that braids into itself (as opposed to one that’s laced together).

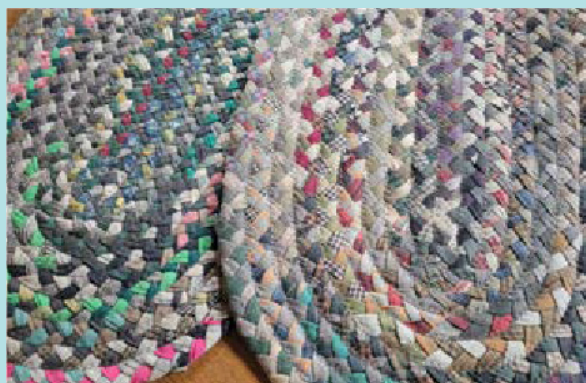
Lacing and Sewing

Sunrise Swirl, the practice project on here, doesn’t use any lacing or sewing (since rugs with four or more braided strands are braided into the rug body), but the techniques are important if you want to try making the other varieties of braided rugs.

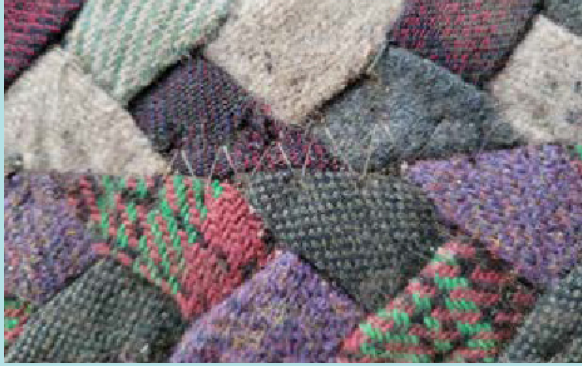
Lacing—Whether you want to make a circle, an oval, or a heart

—you need to use waxed, heavyweight thread to lace the braid to itself to build the shape. Lacing often feels like a laborious and time-consuming finale to the generally fast process of creating the braid itself. Some beginners also have a hard time getting braids to join properly, no matter how tightly they pull the needle and thread.

Stitching your Braided Rug on a Machine—Instead of lacing, some people like to sew their braids together using the zigzag stitch on their sewing machine. If you are a machine aficionado, and you don't mind (or even prefer) that the zigzag stitches will show, then go for it! Make sure to use a sturdy needle—a standard sewing needle will snap in half for sure. While sewing, it's important to keep your rug flat, so you'll want to try to stack books or use other objects to create a working surface that is level with your sewing machine's needle plate.



These small oval rugs were zigzag stitched on a sewing machine rather than laced or braided in.



This close-up shows how the zigzag stitches join together the braids. Most rug makers use clear invisible thread so the stitches won't be as noticeable.

Braids with More Strands—Variations of the braided rug use different materials and different numbers of strands. Eight- or ten-strand braided rugs can look like witchcraft, but chances are your grandmother or great-grandmother regularly made them. The more strands you braid with, the more your technique resembles weaving. Often these variations are easier because they braid into themselves, and you can skip the time-consuming lacing stage at the end of the project.



The lacing on older rugs can deteriorate, but these breaks can be repaired. Simply lace the splits back together.

HOW MATERIALS AFFECT BRAIDED RUGS

Because there are so many varieties of braids, the ease of the method of braiding often depends on the materials you choose and the complexity of your rug design. If you love braiding, know that Sunrise Swirl, the practice project on here, is just the beginning—there is a whole world of variations out there that are exciting and easy to learn. You can use stretchy or woven fabrics (wool), synthetics, or a combination of them all. If you use cotton fabrics, like quilting cottons, you will need a lot more material. The evenness of your braid will affect how the rug lies, so if you're cutting up old clothing, try to match fabrics with similar weights.



The lacing stage used to construct traditional braided rugs can feel like it takes at least as long as the braiding. I prefer making “braided-in” varieties (I have a degree in sewing, but anything that allows me to skip it is still a shortcut I favor).



I like to use different-colored plastic craft needles with a dull tip and large eye, some people use diaper pins labeled 1-4 with a marker. No matter what you use, make sure to have a system in place so you weave your strands in the same order every time.



For Sunrise Swirl, the practice project on here, I used strips of T-shirt material cut to about 2" (5.1cm) wide. Winding them into rag balls after cutting helps to keep everything organized.



Be careful about tension with any material—your braid shouldn't be too loose, but make it too snug and it will create cupping at the edges. Smaller seat pads

are an easier and useful starter project—this one, created by my friend Beverly's mother-in-law, has been in service for more than 70 years.

Thin Materials—Fabric strips made of thinner materials want to curl in on themselves unless they are heavy or quite wide—some nonstretch cottons curl unless they are cut to at least 6" (15.2cm). Thin cottons will thus create a very fine braid. Pieces made with thin cotton have a tight, mosaic look and take a bit longer to work up because of the smaller volume.

Thick Materials—Wools and wool blends have more weight, so you can quickly create a larger, more durable rug with less material.



Some people like to use leftover braid for projects like these fun decorative balls, laced over expanded polystyrene foam shapes.

JOINING METHODS FOR NEW STRIPS

When making braided rugs, there are three ways you can add new material to the ends of your working strips. Try to work with strands of different lengths so these splices don't all occur in the same place, especially if you are using the bow tie join to make knots.

Method 1: If you are using a stretchy material, you can layer the beginning of your new strand on top of the end of your working strand

and continue braiding. The strips should overlap by about 1" (2.5cm). Because of the nature of stretch fabric, the two ends will naturally wrap together to create an invisible splice. If this method doesn't feel secure enough for you, use the bow tie join ([see here](#)).

Method 2: If you're using woven materials like wool, they won't splice the same way and will need to be sewn together. This can easily be done by hand. If you prefer to use a sewing machine, make sure to keep it nearby and ready—you'll need to connect ends often as you work.

Method 3: The bow tie join ([see here](#)).

HOW TO MAKE A BRAIDED RUG

Make the Base Braid



1. Fold two different-length strips of material (about 1 yd. [91.4cm] long) over each other with the middles at the top of your working area as shown.



2. For at least the first half of the rug-making process, use a clamp or binder clip to secure the top of the braid to your work surface. **Note:** I used the back of a cork placemat—use what you have handy. Pull the strand on the far right over the strand directly beside it, under the middle strand, and over the far-left strand.

Tip:

The way I've written the instructions, you will end up with a welcome mat-sized rug. If you want to make a bigger rug, create a longer starting braid.

Tip:

When you're first starting out, it's a good idea to put a pin, clothespin, or other marker in the top starting loops of your braid. This will help you keep track of where you are throughout the process.



3. After every braid, pull the strand snug so your braid stays tidy and has consistent tension.



4. Begin each time with the new far-right strand, pulling it over the next strand, under the middle strand, and over the far-left strand. Pull the strand snug. Continue braiding until the braid is about 8" (20.3cm) long.



5. Turn the piece so that the braid is on the left and the working strands are on the right. The far-right strand is now at the top. Move the clamp to the middle of the braid as shown. It's time to begin braiding in.

Round One



1. Move the starting point of the braid so it's pointing down. Take the far-right (top) strand and pull it over the next strand, under the middle strand, and over the far-left (bottom) strand. Then thread the strand under and through the first available loop on the braid. **Note:** in this photo, the needle is worked under and through this loop, ready to be pulled through. This strand is now the far-left strand.



2. Repeat the same braiding pattern (over, under, over, then under and up through the first available loop) down the side of the braid and around the starting point. Turn the project as you work so you're always working in the same order.

Tip:

If you'd rather create a smaller decorative table rug or chair cover, continue braiding in the same way for a few more rounds. Once you're happy with the look and size of your rug, jump to [Finishing Off](#) on here to learn how to finish the piece.

Round Two



1. Once you return to the beginning loops of round one, you will begin to add increase stitches. Add increases to the four bottom loops (indicated with arrows) by braiding twice into each loop.



2. Turn the piece so your working strands are in the correct order.



3. Fold a new fabric strip in half and feed it up through the loop in the middle of all the other strands. I added the pale peach strands.



4. Continue to braid down the side, working the new strand into the over-under braiding pattern. Now that you have six strands, you need to make six increase stitches (two in each loop) into the six bottom loops indicated with arrows.



5. Turn the piece so your working strands are in the correct order.

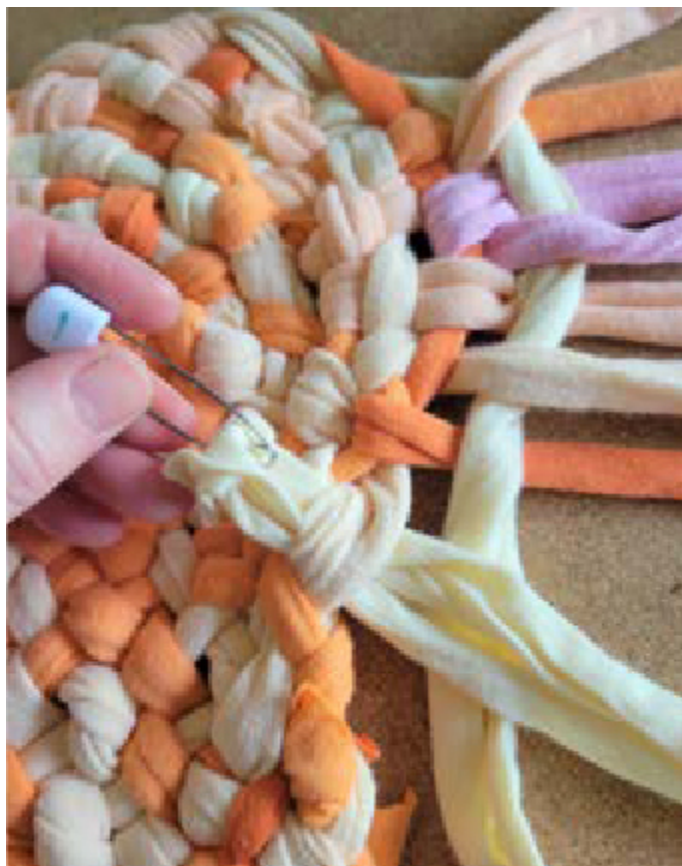
Remember, use pins or clips, and keep your strands numbered. Update your numbering every time you add new strands to make sure you continue to braid in the correct order.



Round Three



1. Part the two middle strands. Fold a new fabric strip in half and feed it up through the loop in the middle of all the other strands. I added the bright pink strands.



2. Continue to braid down the side, working the new strands into the over-under braiding pattern.



3. Now that you have eight strands, you need to make eight increase stitches (two in each loop) into the eight bottom loops.



4. Turn the piece so your working strands are in the correct order. Braid up the other side and make a second set of eight increase stitches (two in each loop) around the other end to complete the round.

Are Increases Really Necessary?

Yes! If you crochet, knit, or sew clothing, you're already familiar with the concept of "ease." With braided rugs, you can create a few rounds without an increase if you're making something small, but anything larger than a seat cushion must have increases.



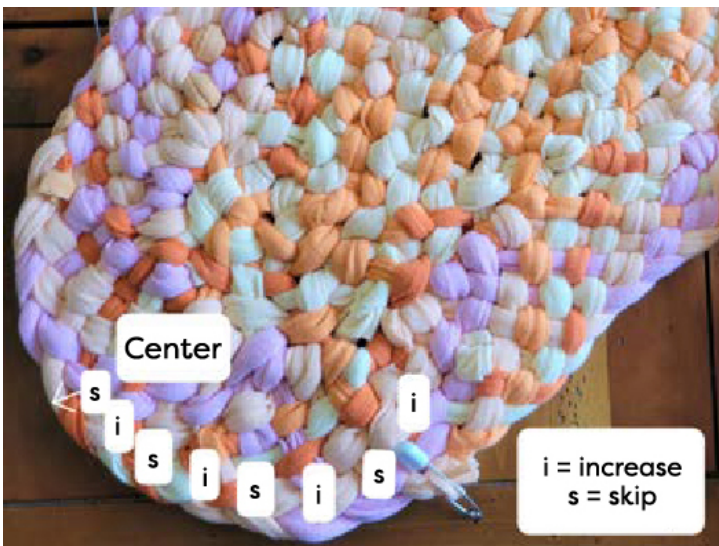
This is a four-strand rug (called *Wine Country*), which I began it as an experiment to see how far I could get without adding increases. The rug just gets lacier around the edges as the stitches move farther apart. The finished rug is pretty and can be used for decorative uses, but it would cause falls if used on the floor.

Round Four

In the previous rounds, you made the increases in consecutive order. The next round of increases includes a single stitch in between each increase stitch.



1. Finish braiding down the side until you reach the location where you'll start your increases (I marked off this section with safety pins).



2. Increase in the first loop, single stitch in the next loop, increase in the third loop, single stitch in the next loop, etc., to create a total of

eight increase stitches with single stitches in between them.

3. After you add the increases around the bend, braid up the other side and make a second set of eight increase stitches with single stitches in between them. Turn the piece so your working strands are in the correct order.

Round Five

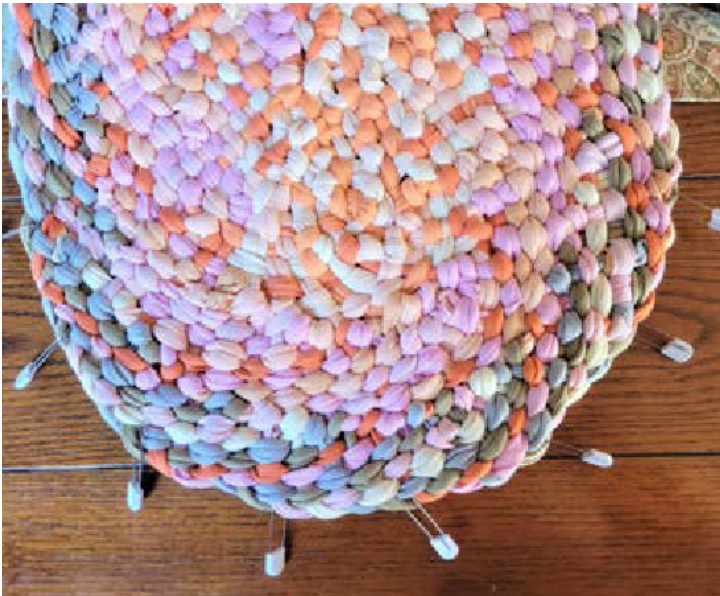
The next round of increases includes single stitches in two loops between each increase stitch.



1. Finish braiding down the side until you reach the location where you'll start your increases. Note that I've made color changes as I added fabric to strips as they reached their ends. The blue and green strands are attached to the strands I began working with (using bowtie joins).

Round Six and Beyond

At this point, you're probably detecting a really simple pattern. As your rug grows, change the formula every round by adding an extra single stitch in the loops between your increase stitches on each end. Continue to mark where you need to add increases with safety pins to keep your rug growth even.



2. Increase in the first loop, single stitch in the next two loops, increase in the fourth loop, single stitch in the next two loops, etc., to create a total of eight increase stitches with single stitches in the two loops in between them. I put a safety pin into the spaces where I need to put the increases.

Finishing Off

Before finishing off your rug, stand back and evaluate its symmetry. One side will look like a more natural place at which to end the spiral (normally this is right before you'd start new rounds with new increase patterns). Because this example rug uses eight strands, count eight loops back from where you'd like your rug to finish and begin the finish there.



1. Begin the final part of the braid. Follow the over-under pattern with the first strand, then pull it up through the loop and place it on top of the rug.



2. Follow the over-under pattern with the second strand, then pull it down through the loop and place it under the rug. Alternate as you braid, pulling every other strand up through the loop and leaving them on top of the rug and the pulling the rest down and leaving them under

the rug (four strands on top and four strands underneath).



3. Clip each strand to about 3"-4" (7.6-10.2cm) long.



4. Weave the clipped strands into the rug to hide the ends, following

the matching color line as closely as possible. (I am weaving a brown strand into the line of brown loops.)

THE CROCHETED RUG

Practice Project:

GHOSTS OF SUMMERS PAST

Crochet is a well known craft for making blankets and clothing, but craftspeople have long used the same techniques to create durable, beautiful rugs. In this section I'll walk you through a brief history, show you how to prep some unconventional materials, then teach you step-by-step how to construct your own granny-square rug. Follow the technique step-by-step as written to create the Ghosts of Summers Past practice project. Once you're comfortable with the technique, use it to create your own rug designs.

This project has a sense of childlike joy created by the materials used: old tie-dye shirts made by my kids in summers past. I decided to transform my children's shirts into individual closed granny squares (my grandmother's favorite design), then connect them all together to create a rug that tugs at my heartstrings.



Finished dimensions: 24" x 48" (61cm x 1.2m)

Tools and Materials

- Crochet hook (see [here](#))
- 18 small children's T-shirts, cut into strips



One of my earliest memories is of sitting on the floor of my grandmother's entry hall, with her copies of *The Workbasket* fanned out around me. The black and white covers with their doilies, collars, and occasional rug made me dream of crafting, even as a tiny girl.

BACKGROUND

My grandmother spent hours sitting on a steaming radiator and crocheting, while I flipped through copies of *The Workbasket* and sorted buttons, anticipating the colors she would need for her projects. The practice of loading hope chests with crocheted goods for the next church bazaar was a huge part of my daily life as a child, and the importance of crafting was firmly ensconced in me. Crocheted rugs have a rich history when it comes to thrift, as well. They can be made from new fabrics, yarns, cut-up old shirts, and one of my favorite artists, Jean Ray Laury (the writer behind the 1971 masterpiece *Handmade from Practically Anything*), even crocheted an oval rug with plastic bags and bread wrappers.

CROCHET RUG VARIATIONS

The Wells and Richardson Company of Burlington, Vermont, founded in 1872 by a group of Civil War veterans, were well known for selling questionable medicines, but were also famous for less questionable household products like their legendary Diamond Dyes. To bolster the popularity (and sales) of these dyes, they published many free pamphlets with related projects (including crocheted rugs), showing women how to recolor their castaway clothing and cut the pieces up for rug making.

Knowing a few basic stitches meant that you could attempt (without illustrations) the rugs described in their pamphlets, and it really is still as simple as that. With these stitches you can create any of the three varieties of crocheted rug:

Radial—A circular or oval rug in which the stitches are continuously added in a round.

Back-and-Forth—A shape built of continuous stacked rows of crochet stitches running back and forth rather than in a round.

Pieced—A rug built from smaller squares that are stitched together once complete. The Ghosts of Summers Past practice project on here is a pieced crocheted rug.

PREPPING T-SHIRTS FOR CROCHET

Cutting up t-shirts is a fantastic thrifty move that works well with making rag rugs. You can create the material you need by cutting the T-shirt seams, laying the pieces flat, and diligently measuring with a clear ruler and rotary cutting perfectly even strips, but since T-shirt material curls and stretches, I prefer cutting more organic strips with a pair of scissors.

Kids' T-shirts yield enough fabric to crochet a block that is around 8" (20.3cm) square. Adults' shirts should create a block that is about twice that size. You should plan on needing more shirts than you think. I cut my shirts into strips that are about $\frac{3}{4}$ " (1.9cm) wide. If you want to crochet a larger rug, you will need more material than a single T-shirt can provide. One alternative is to use jersey sheets, which will yield a lot more material.



Cutting T-shirt strips “corkscrew”-style is a fast, easy way to prepare material for a crocheted rug.



I tend to cut strips from T-shirts as I work.



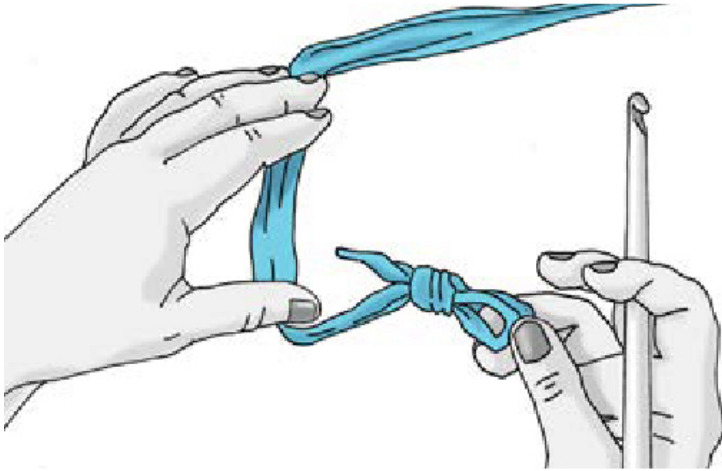
I used a stack of my kids' old T-shirts to make the Ghosts of Summers Past practice project on here.

THE BASIC STITCHES

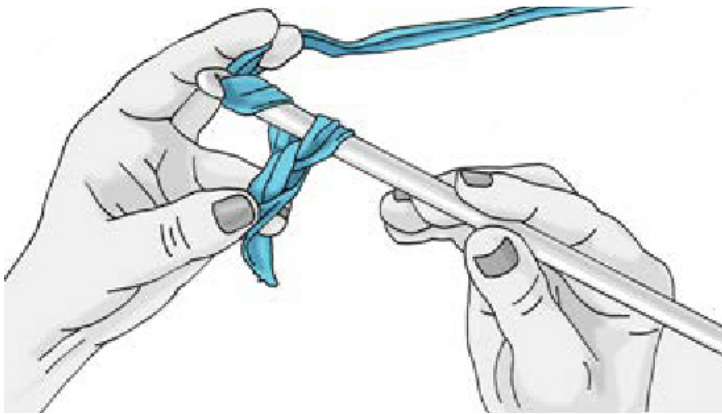
Chain Stitch (ch)



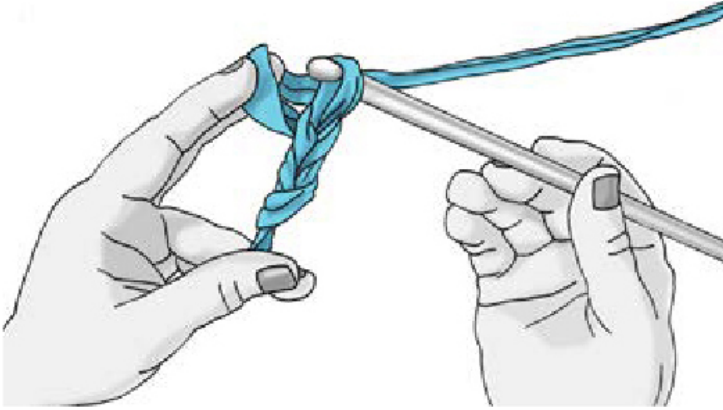
1. Make a loop.



2. Pull the yarn or fabric strand through the loop to create a loop with a knot at the bottom.

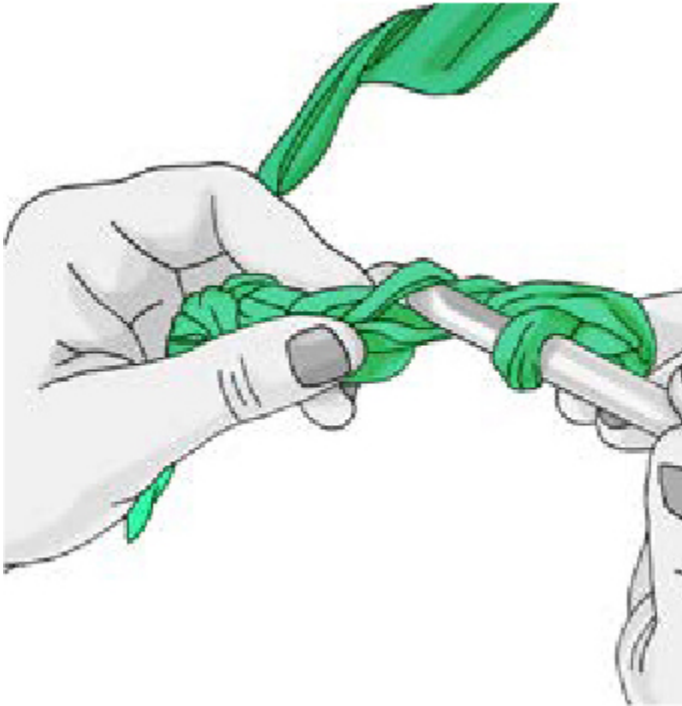


3. Put your hook through the loop and tighten it. Then wrap the yarn or fabric strand over the hook.



4. Pull the yarn through the loop. You now have a two-link chain. Continue pulling new yarn loops through the previous loops to form a chain of the desired length.

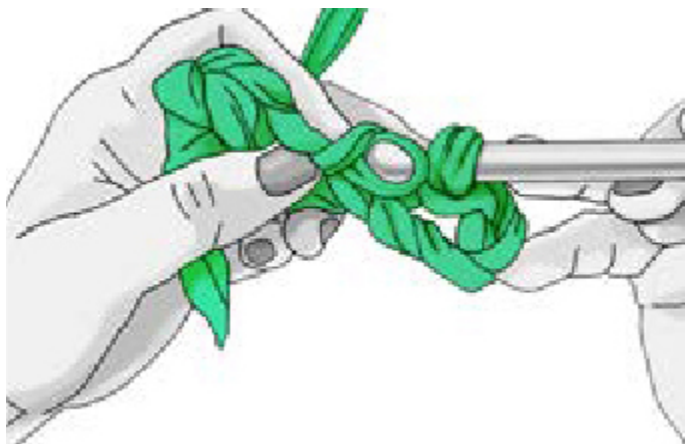
Single Crochet (sc)



1. Slide the hook under the top loop of the stitch in the previous row.



2. Wrap the yarn or fabric strand over the hook.





3. Pull the yarn or fabric strand through the loop to complete the single crochet stitch.

Double Crochet (dc)



1. Wrap the yarn or fabric strand over the hook.



2. Slide the hook under the top loop of the stitch in the previous row.



3. Wrap the yarn or fabric strand over the hook again.



4. Pull the yarn or fabric strand through the first two loops on the hook.



5. Wrap the yarn or fabric strand over the hook again.



6. Pull the yarn or fabric strand through both loops to complete the double crochet stitch.

HOW TO MAKE A GRANNY SQUARE

Foundation Ring



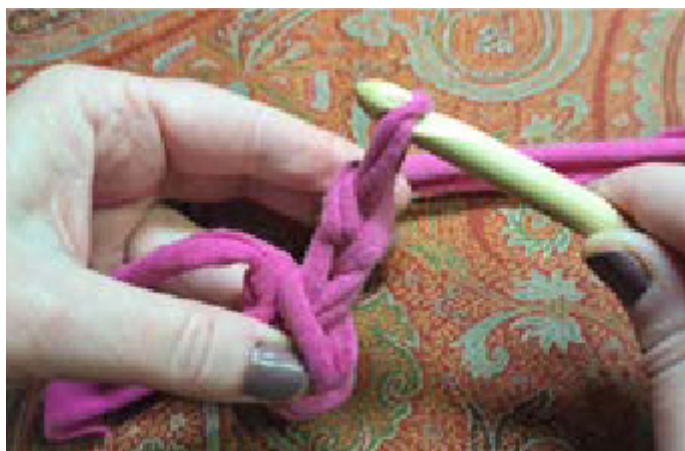


1. Start with 3ch and push the hook back through the first ch st.

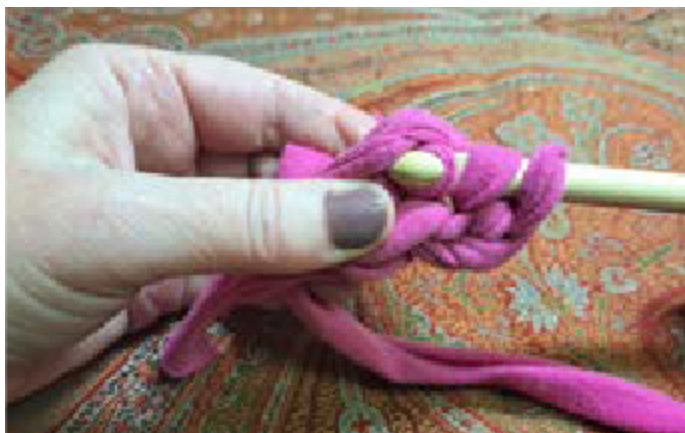


3. Pull the strand through to create the ring at the center of the granny square.

Round One



1. 2ch out from the center ring.





2. Work 1dc around the center ring.



3. 2ch out from the previous st. (These ch sts will form the corner bend.)



4. 2dc into the center ring.



5. Rep steps 3-4 two more times to create the other two sides of the square. 2ch out from the previous st.



6. 1sc into first st to close the square.

Round Two



1. 2ch out from Round One.



2. 1dc into the st to the left of these ch sts.



3. *(2dc, 2ch, 2dc) into the corner sp and 1dc into remaining sts to corner.* Rep * to * two more times to fill in the other sides of the square.

4. 1sc into first st to close the square.

Round Three



1. Rep Round Two steps 1-3: 2ch, 1dc into each st to corner, (2dc, 2ch, 2dc) into corner to fill in the square.



2. 1sc into first st to close the square.

Finishing the Square



1. Cut the tail to about 2” (5.1cm) long. Wrap the tail around your hook and pull it through the loop on the hook to create a knot. Voila!

BLOCKING

Once you finish making your squares, you’re ready to block them. Blocking means ironing a piece with steam to reshape it. Blocking is not necessarily required for this type of project but making sure your squares are uniform and flat will make piecing them together that much easier (and create a cleaner finished product).

Blocking works well for anything made from natural fibers, especially cotton. You can wet the piece a bit with a spray bottle for an even better result. If you’re using a synthetic or blended material, you run the risk of melting the material with the iron. Blocking is also temporary if attempted with synthetics—they won’t retain their shape after blocking.



There is a lot of flexibility with this design—the order of the squares and rows isn't fixed until you like the arrangement and begin piecing the blocks together.



In the example steps, I've used dark purple yarn to show the stitches more clearly. For the finished project, I used multicolor yarn I dyed. Normally, I try to

match my rug colors so the connecting stitches won't be as noticeable.

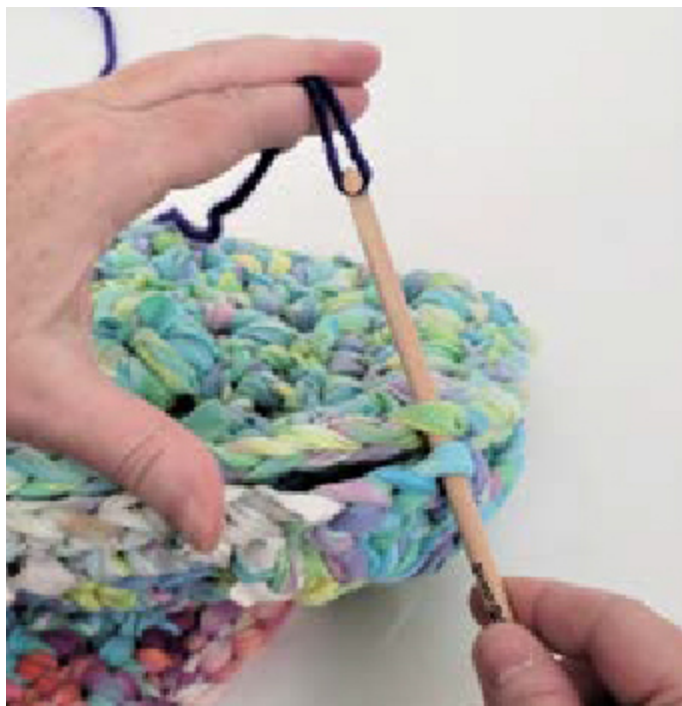
PIECING YOUR CROCHET BLOCKS TOGETHER



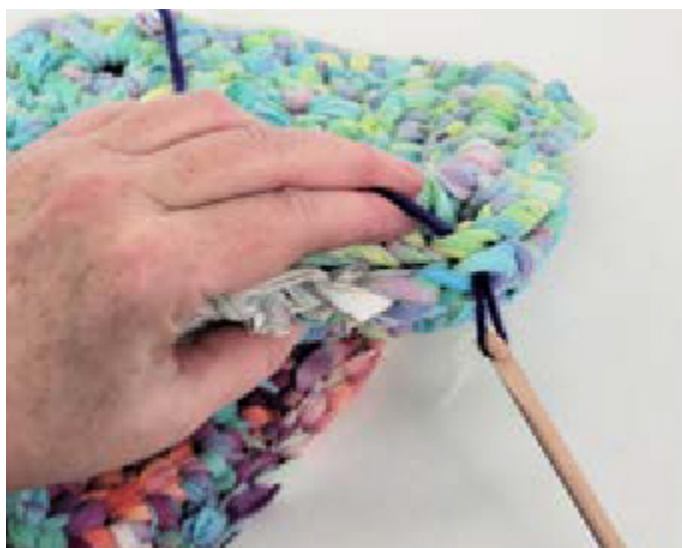
1. Place two of your blocks with the right sides together.



2. Slide the hook through the outer loops of both blocks.



3. Loop yarn around the hook (you do not need to knot it).



4. Pull the yarn loop through both outer loops. Do not pull through

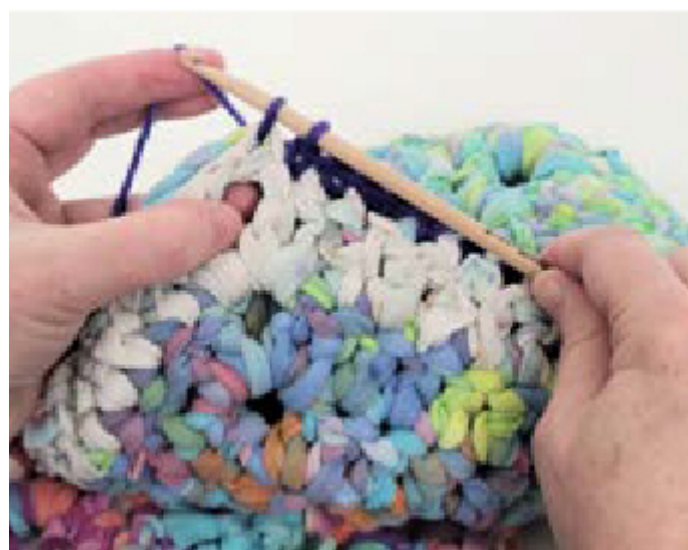
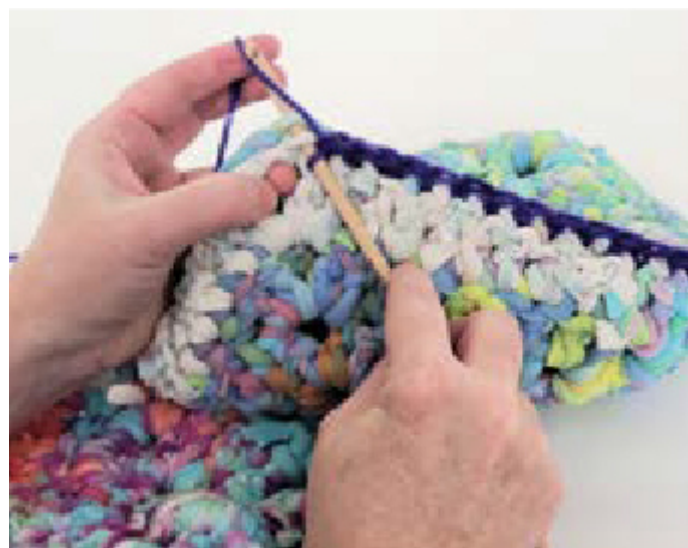
either of the yarn tails.

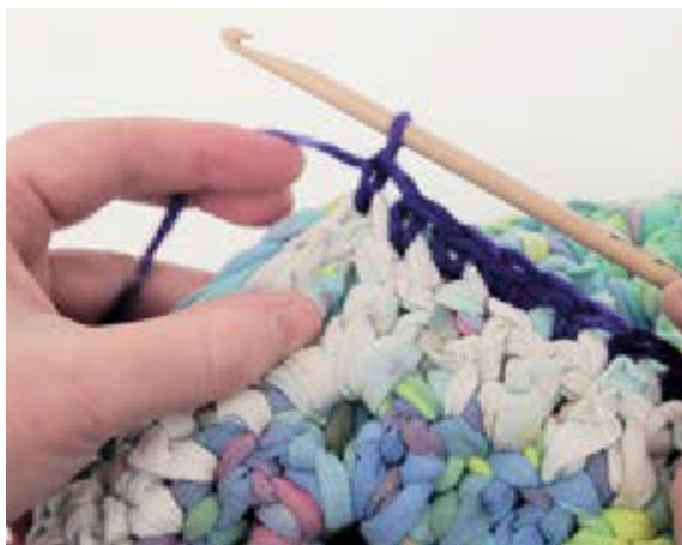


5. Take both the long and short yarn tails and place them over the hook. Then pull them both back through the yarn loop. **Note:** You will have two yarn loops on the hook for these first few stitches—work with these loops as if they were one single loop.

Note:

I worked the short yarn tail into the piece in step 5 to save time, better secure the yarn, and avoid having to weave in ends later in the process. You don't have to work the tail in on this step. If you prefer, you can wait and weave the short tail through at the end.





6. Work a row of single crochet stitches into the remaining outer loops until you reach the last set of outer loops on this edge (as shown).



7. Cut the yarn to about 2½ (6.4cm) long.



8. Wrap the cut yarn over the hook and pull it through to finish the row. Weave the yarn tail back through the stitches.



The junctions of your blocks will look something like this. The surface of the rug should be nice and flush, even if your squares were curling at the edges. Connecting your blocks and steaming your finished rug with an iron will make it look properly finished.

THE TRADITIONAL HOOKED RUG

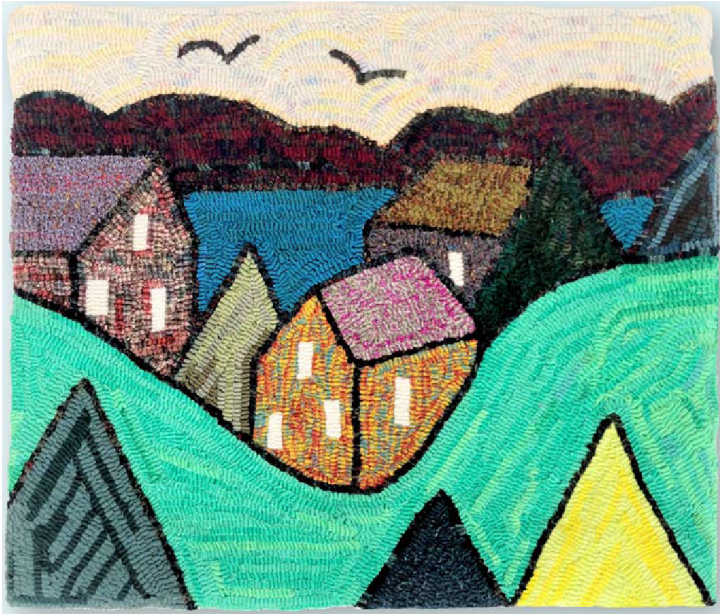
Practice Project:

VIEW FROM DIGBY

The traditional hooked rug has a long and lush tradition, and in this section I'll walk you through an overview of the history, give you tips for getting started, then teach you step-by-step how to construct your own rug. Follow the technique and the pattern on here with similar materials to create the View From Digby practice project. Once you're comfortable with the technique, use it to create your own rug designs.

This design pays tribute to wonderful and whimsical Canadian folk artist Maud Lewis, a Nova Scotian icon born around the turn of the twentieth century. She painted nearly every inch of the tiny home she shared with her husband, covering it with lively, folksy flowers and cats. I have used one of her favorite views of town, that of Digby Bay, to create a simple, open landscape.

My landscape is hooked in a combination of lush, green solids and a variety of plaids I knew would add texture and interest to the trees and the small houses. Maud often used marine paint and endearingly mismatched colors in her pieces. I mixed common marine paint colors with some mismatching of my own to bring Maud's spirit to this little piece of storytelling art.



Finished dimensions: 22" x 19" (55.9 x 48.3cm)

Tools and Materials

- Rug hook
- 26" x 23" (66 x 58.4cm) backing material (linen, burlap, rug warp, or monk's cloth)
- Working material (traditionally strips of wool, but any material you can pull through the backing to create loops)
- Scissors
- A frame or hoop (to keep the backing material taut)
- Pattern on here, transferred to your backing material ([see here](#))



This is a vibrant and playful original design executed with thicker strips by Carol Gillingham.

BACKGROUND

The traditional hooked rug is my personal favorite. The history is cozy and charming, and the design possibilities are endless. You hook a rug by pulling loops of material up through the backing fabric with a hook. That's it. This technique is a one-trick pony—you simply pull loop after loop. The magic is in the variety you can achieve with these loops—you can pull tall loops, short loops, loops that are as narrow as a single thread, or super wide loops with ripped edges that create that well-known primitive look. Loops can be made of wool, silk, leftover quilt fabric, old concert T-shirts—anything you can pull through your backing fabric can become a part of your masterpiece.

Rug hooking began sometime in the middle of the nineteenth century when a clever person in New England or Canada decided it would be faster or handier to make a pile rug using something other than a sewing needle. Rug hooking is one of the few crafts that is truly native to North America. The first rug hookers used bent nails set into wooden handles to craft rugs using homespun material or burlap sacks as backing.

As with the other rag rug techniques, rug hooking began as a craft

of thrift and evolved into an art form. For early crafters, it was a rare outlet for their creativity. Early designs, sketched directly on backing fabric with a coal from the fireplace, featured bouquets of flowers, ocean ships, portraits of the family's cozy home or beloved dog, or even exotic lions or elephants they might have seen in a traveling show. Rugs with simple patterns, made by tracing pan covers or postcards, decorated the hearth, warmed the cold boards beside the bed, and decorated kitchens and upstairs halls. The very best rugs with the most well-executed designs were used on the first floor in rooms where visitors would be most likely to see them.

What is Primitive Style?

“Primitive style” means the traditional folk-art style, using wider strips of material and showing recognizable compositional elements like a lack of perspective and unusual proportions.



In *English Peas*, a primitive rug hooked by Karen Burbidge and designed by Pris Butler, the peas are as big as the sheep and the berry stalks tower over the entire farmyard.

CHOOSING AND SIZING YOUR MATERIALS

I often advise beginners to start with yarn, which will help them learn the hooking technique without having to worry about whether they're creating twists in the fabric strips. You can begin with wool yarn (which will be just as durable as working with strips of wool fabric) and work your way up to evenly pulling through flat fabric strips. You can also mix and match any number of different materials in the same piece!

If you prefer a folk art, "primitive" style, you'll want to use wider strips with less precise edges. The artists behind the early rugs we now prize as primitive folk art would have ripped their strips by hand, so modern crafters can emulate this style by using a similar process to prepare their materials. If you're using a hand-crank cutter, the sizes with the higher numbers cut wider strips so you can work faster and in a more "folk art" style.

If you want to create very realistic pieces with a lot of detail, you'll want to use thinner yarns or narrower strips of material that are cut with cleaner edges. The resulting loops will be smaller and tidier so you can create fine touches. The most common sizes range from $\frac{3}{32}$ " (2.4mm) wide to $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6.4mm) wide (sizes #3 and #8 on a hand-crank cutter). If you're using a hand-crank cutter, the sizes with lower numbers cut skinnier strips so you can achieve more detail.



Wool yardage is the most traditional material from which to cut rug hooking strips.



Make a small snip in your material and pull to tear off the strip. You can't rip really narrow strips because you'll basically atomize the wool, but the larger, rougher strips look fantastic in primitive-style rugs.



Small hand-crank cutters like this one from Fraser Rugs (<https://www.fraserrug.com/>) will create precise strips. You can buy the tools new or used, and different cutter heads are available for cutting strips of different widths.



Some people use scissors to cut their strips. This method works like using a dedicated fabric strip cutter, it just takes a bit longer.

CHOOSING YOUR BACKING FABRIC

The main backing fabrics rugmakers use for rug hooking are burlap, linen (natural or bleached white), monk's cloth (not to be confused with cross-stitch monk's cloth for needlework, which has no stretch), and rug warp.



Vintage feed sacks were the original rug hooking backing fabric. The size of the sacks available dictated the size of rug you could make.

Burlap is the loosest weave and the least expensive. Feed sacks, being burlap, were the original foundations for hooked rugs. We've learned over time that burlap rots when it's wet—many irreplaceable heirlooms have suffered severe damage. If you are not putting your rug on the floor and it's destined to serve as a wall hanging, then use burlap. Burlap is still very widely used in the U.K. despite being out-of-favor in the U.S.



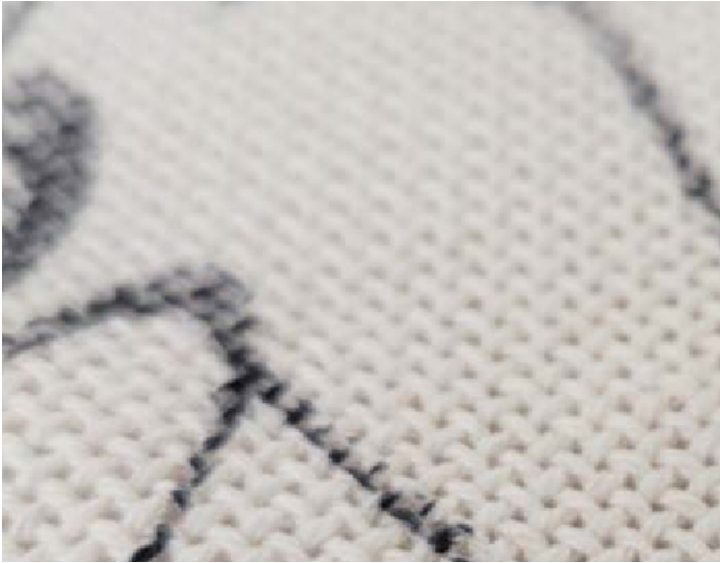
Linen is the next loosest backing and the most expensive. It can be beautiful and supple or coarse and a little hairy. For people who like using wide-cut fabric strips, linen and burlap are the best backings. Their weaves are loose enough that pulling wide loops through will be a bit easier. When you pull wide strips through tighter backings, it's more of a fight and you're likely to get a very sore hand or wrist.

Tip

For rug hooking, remember the number four. Your backing material should always be 4" (10.2cm) larger around the outside than your desired finished size and the working material should be four times larger than the surface area to be covered. To cover a 1" × 1" (2.5 × 2.5cm) square, you'll need a 4" × 4" (10.2 × 10.2cm) piece of material.



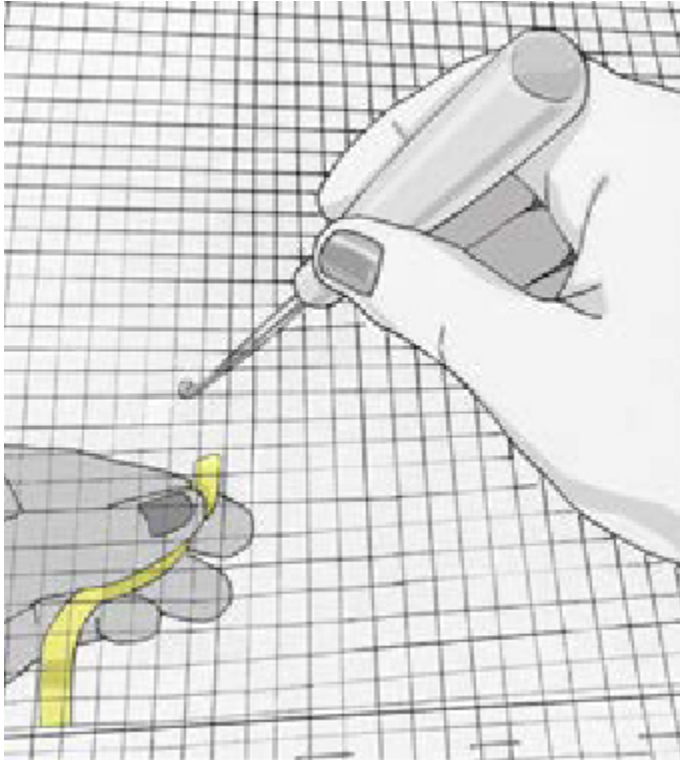
Monk's cloth is a white all-cotton fabric with a tighter weave than linen. It's good for working with finer-cut fabric strips and thinner yarns. Sometimes monk's cloth is gridded, which can be helpful with drawing your own patterns. Do not use the type of monk's cloth that is made specifically for needlepoint—it is completely useless to rugmakers.



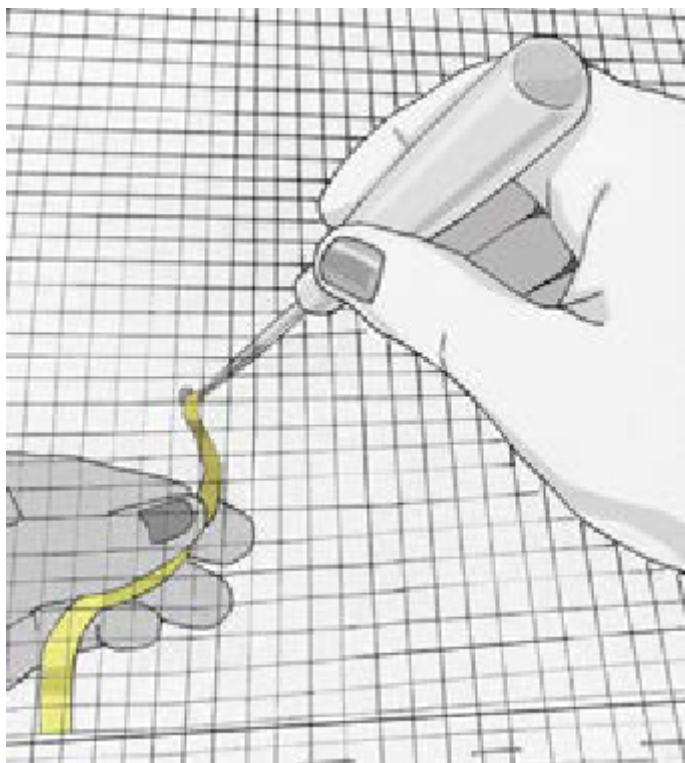
Rug warp is usually cotton and has the tightest weave. It's good for working with finer-cut fabric strips and thinner yarns.

HOW TO MAKE A TRADITIONAL HOOKED RUG

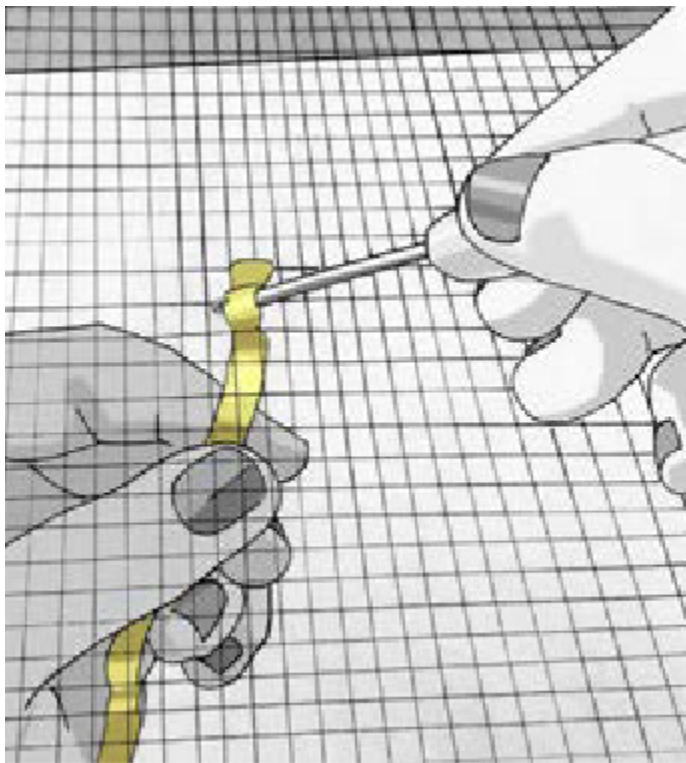
Note: these step-by-step illustrations were drawn to clearly show both hands. When you are working with backing fabric, the hand beneath won't be visible.



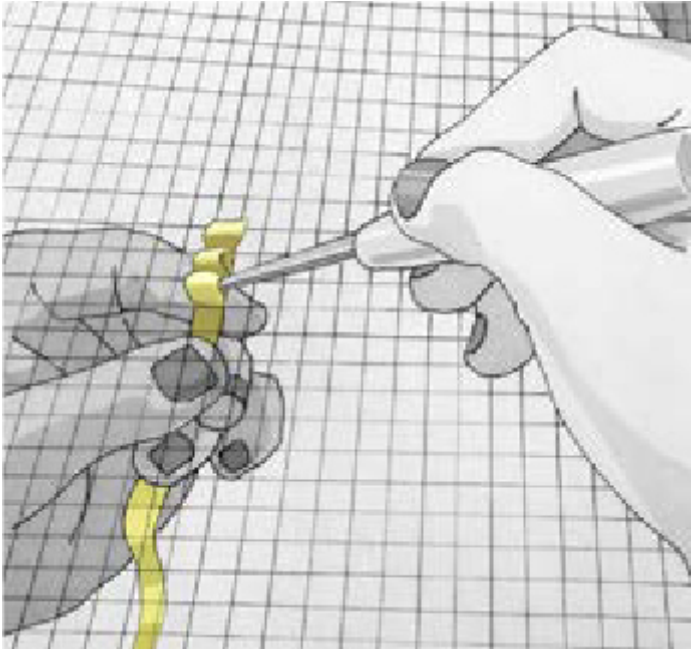
1. Hold the hook in your dominant hand on top of the pattern and hold the strip of material underneath in your other hand.



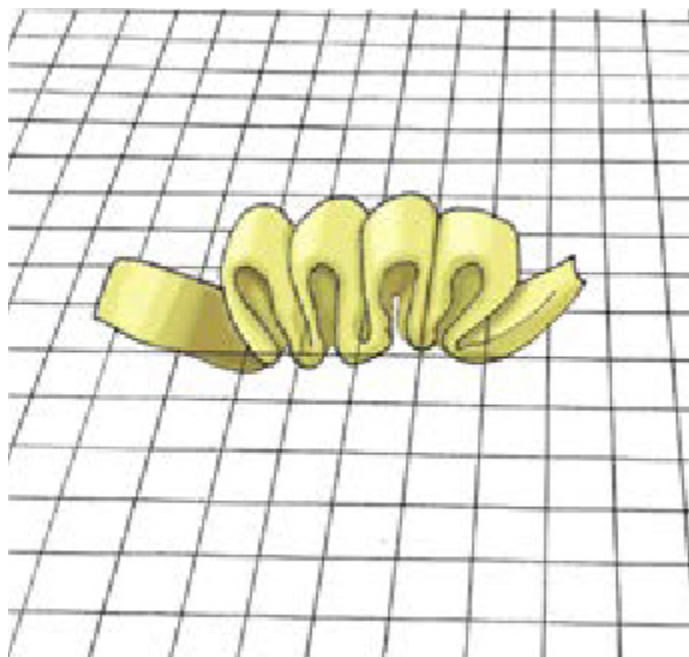
2. Reach down with the hook and wrap the strip of material over it.



3. Pull the end of the strip up through the backing fabric with the hook and leave this tail on top. Reach down through the next space with the hook, wrap the strip of material over it, and pull up a loop of the material.



4. Continue pulling up loops of material. The loops can be as even or uneven as you like—since this is folk art, they don't have to be perfect.



End the section of loops by pulling through the remainder of the strip and leaving that tail on top of the backing fabric (just like the tail at the starting end). If you end the color while the strip is still a longer length, just cut it with scissors, then leave this shorter tail on top.

Loop Style Tips

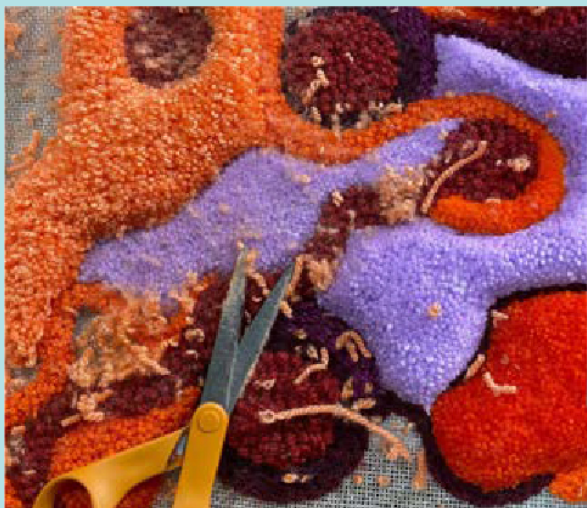
- First work on learning the basic movement of pulling up loops, then figure out what the ideal loops for your project should look like.
- You won't necessarily pull a loop up through every hole in the backing fabric. Just try to create an even flow of loops. If your loops are too bunched together, they will look crowded. When your loops are too far apart, it creates small gaps.
- Don't compare your loops to anyone else's. You may prefer perfect, uniform loops or you may prefer more organic, uneven loops. Use the loop style that works for your designs.

The Waldoboro Style

Traditional hooked rugs don't require special finishing, but in the nineteenth century a little town in Maine became renowned for a style of hooked rug finishing that would eventually be named for them—Waldoboro. The rugs they were producing there had a sculptural quality, with depth and contour cut into the pile (often to mimic floral bouquets). Supposedly they were developed by rugmakers as a way of providing flowers for winter funerals. Waldoboro rugs are very densely hooked, then clipped with fine, sharp scissors to create the luxurious three-dimensional pile. The backing fabric still tightly hugs the yarn or fabric strips in place, so clipping the hooked end doesn't make the rug less durable. Waldoboro rugs are an extraordinary demonstration of tremendous skill and talent.



This masterpiece by Mary Jane Peabody was designed by Waldoboro legend Jacqueline Hansen and clearly shows the dimension achievable with Waldoboro-style shaping.



Sydney Silvi is hooking and shearing this abstract Waldo-boro-style masterpiece a section at a time. She hooks the section, then carves and cuts the surface yarns to achieve sculptural effects.

THE PRODDY RUG

Practice Project:

MOM'S FLOWERS, DAD'S WEEDS

The proddy technique can be used to make full rugs or add beautiful dimension to a piece made using one of the other techniques. In this section, I'll walk you through a brief history of proddy rugs, explore the design and material concerns specific to the technique, then teach you step-by-step how to proddy!

This practice project uses the traditional rug hooking technique on here as a base. Follow the technique step-by-step to add the decorative petals to the Mom's Flowers, Dad's Weeds bouquets. Once you're comfortable with the technique, use it to create your own rug designs and embellishments.

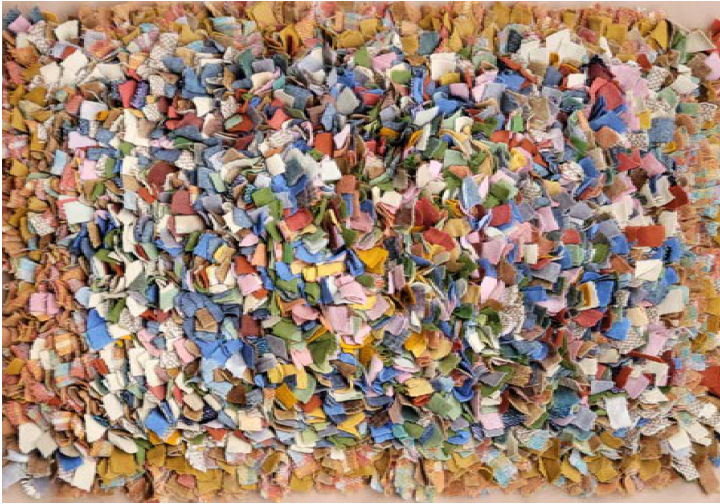
This might be my favorite rug design. It feels sweet and old-fashioned—a reminder of my dad's style of gardening (pulling up anything not obviously in bloom). I like the idea of a rug that faces two different directions. A topsy-turvy rug appeals to my love of ordered chaos—it has a lot of charm and will always be facing the right way no matter how you approach it.



Finished dimensions: 15" x 18" (38.1 x 45.7cm)

Tools and Materials

- Rug hook
- Proddy tool
- Working material (traditionally strips of wool, but any material you can pull through the backing to create loops)
- 6" (15.2cm) fabric petals
- 19" x 22" (48.3 x 55.9cm) backing material (linen, burlap, rug warp, or monk's cloth)
- Scissors
- A frame or hoop (to keep the backing taut)
- Pattern on here, transferred to your backing material (see here)



This gorgeous proddy mat was made by Carole Pelot from wools she had left over from a traditional hooked rug project.

BACKGROUND

In the English-speaking world, rugs in which precut snippets of fabric are pushed through a backing fabric to create pile are known by many names: proddy, proggy, clippy, stobby, peggy, prodded, clipped, cloutie, peg mats, and poke mats. Traditionally, proddy rugs are made entirely of small rectangular fabric scraps either poked or pulled through burlap backing. They're another result of thrift: the burlap sacks used for grain and feed provided large sections of free backing material, and the process used up stores of tiny confetti-sized scraps of material makers had been saving.

Proddy rugs originated in Northern England in the nineteenth century. They were very common in mill and mining regions where the depressed economy meant people had to use up every scrap of clothing and mill waste that could be had. A disparate mix of materials could be used to create a single rug with a soft, warm pile that was both hard-wearing and required very little skill to make.



This is the reverse of Carole's proddy rug, which has held up well to daily use in her home.

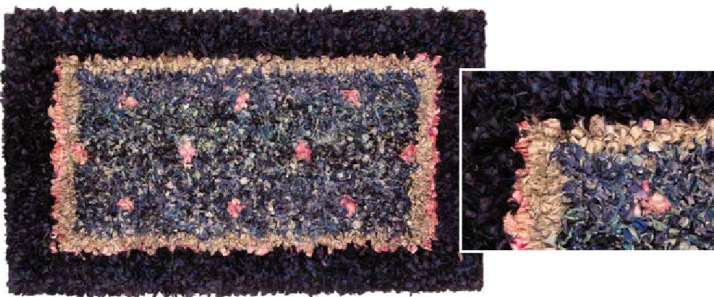


A close-up of the pile shows the wildly tactile quality of this rugmaking form.



This close-up of a nineteenth century American proddy rug shows ribbed knits, jersey knits, wool, and more—a wide mixture of fabrics and weights.

PHOTO COURTESY OF AMERICANA ANTIQUES, [HTTPS://WWW.ETSY.COM/SHOP/AMERICANAANTIQUES](https://www.etsy.com/shop/AMERICANAANTIQUES)



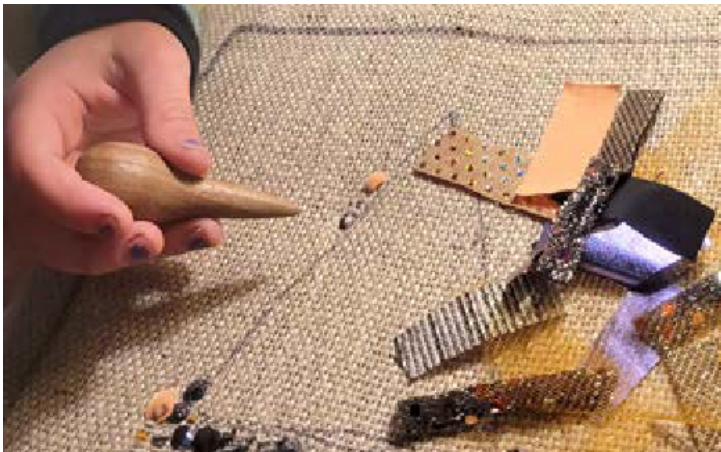
This nineteenth century American rug, also from Americana Antiques, is made entirely with silk pieces. It's faded and lost a few bits over time, but this rug is in remarkably good shape for being made from luxury fabrics.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF AMERICANA ANTIQUES, [HTTPS://WWW.ETSY.COM/SHOP/AMERICANAANTIQUES](https://www.etsy.com/shop/AMERICANAANTIQUES)

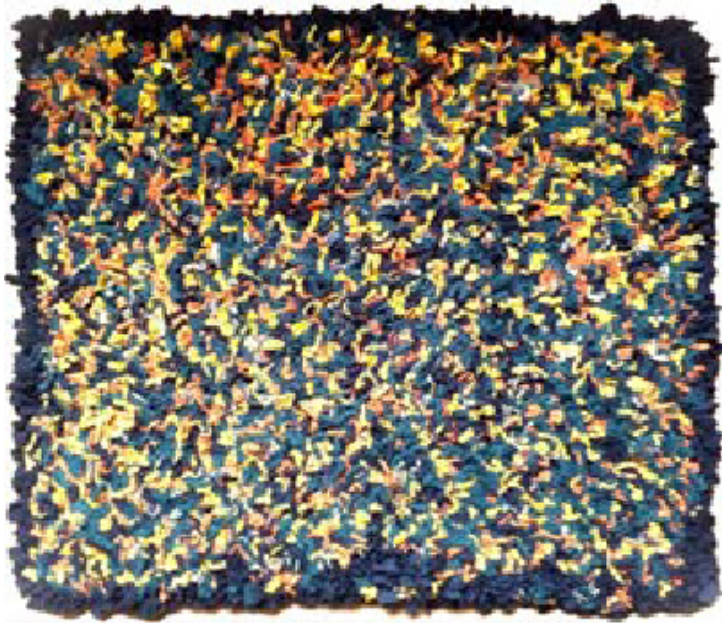
DESIGNING FOR PRODDY

Because of the busy, “noisy” nature of proddy rugs it is essential to work toward a very simple pattern (or no set pattern). I’m not one for rules, but this one is important. If you overcomplicate your proddy pattern, the details will get lost. Many older proddy rugs feature geometric patterns like diamonds. Red diamonds, in particular, were popular in England since local superstition held that a red diamond could repel the devil (these were often placed in front of the fireplace). Looking at simple symbols or folklore is a good way to find and create an easy pattern infused with meaning.

Proddy also works to add interest to rugs made with other techniques. In Mom’s Flowers, Dad’s Weeds, the practice project on here, I filled in the main design using traditional rug hooking, then used the proddy technique to create beautiful, dimensional petals on the flowers. You can create a rug using any of the techniques in the book, then add elements like flower petals, leaves, or raised borders to enhance the piece.



Proddy rug designs need to be simple. In this case, my daughter is using the push method to outline a pine tree.



This phenomenal proddy rug, completed over a weekend by Lorna Harrower, shows the effectiveness of working without a formal pattern.

Remember to leave space as you create the background so there's enough room for the proddy additions. It's often easier to add proddy elements to mixed-technique pieces by using a rug hook to pull the proddy pieces up through to the front (rather than pushing them through from the back). Ironing at the end will also help set the proddy pieces so they lie exactly how you want them to.



This simple masterpiece by Karen Hansen demonstrates how powerful a simple, graphic design can be.



Jeanne Lewis Coates cleverly chose to add a proddy frame to this hooked flower pillow. It's a smart and colorful way to accentuate the main image while hiding the join between the backing fabric and the wool pillow base.



As I hook the background of my rug, I leave an empty channel where I'm going to add the proddy elements. The width of the channel depends on the number of proddy pieces I need to add.

CHOOSING YOUR MATERIALS

Generally, any fabric will work for the proddy technique. I have seen people proddy with strips of garbage bags and leather. Proddy rugs are not usually pictorial and are often meant to be used as floor rugs, so pretty much anything you'd be okay with stepping on is a good material. Cut pieces of winter sweaters, for example, create a rug that's deliciously soft and durable. Loose woolens, formal silks that unravel easily, acrylic felt sheets, fleece—even fabrics that don't work well for traditional rug hooking can be repurposed with proddy.



These are some crazy, completely impractical fabrics from the craft store that actually work great for proddy. I used them to make a blingy holiday tree design.

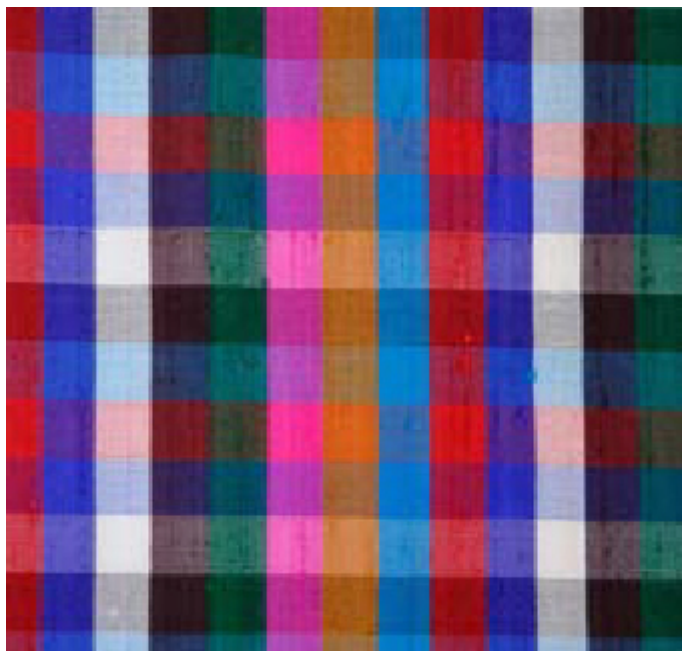


You can also add the proddy details early in the process and hook the background and other elements around them.

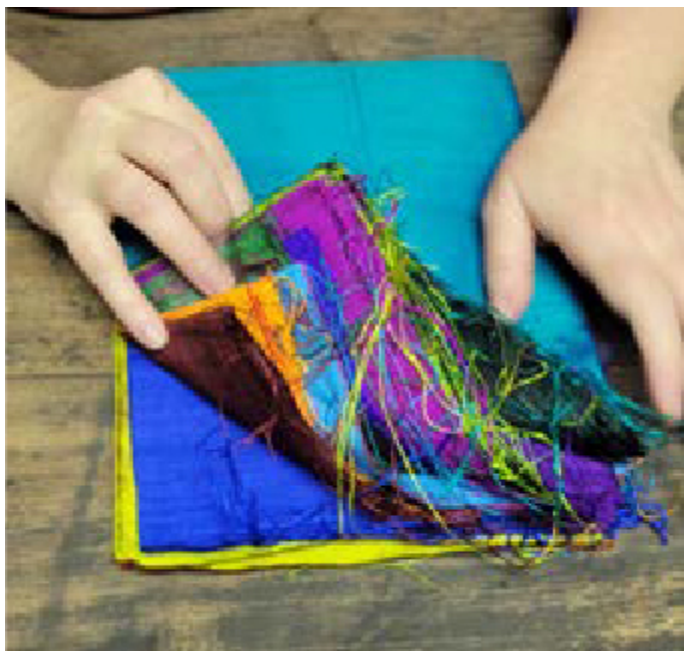
Tip:

My friend Heather Wing taught me a neat trick for creating mixed-technique flowers. Hook the center of the flower so it's highest in the middle and forms a dome. The finished flower, with proddy petals, will look more realistic!





I love the papery crispness of fabrics like shantung, silk dupioni, and taffeta but they don't work well for most forms of rug making. For proddy, however, they're great!



Fabrics that fray, unravel, and like to fight back are perfect for proddy. Even formal fabrics that might not seem like they'd last very long are surprisingly

durable—silk, in particular, is very strong and holds up well in a proddy rug.

CHOOSING YOUR BACKING FABRIC

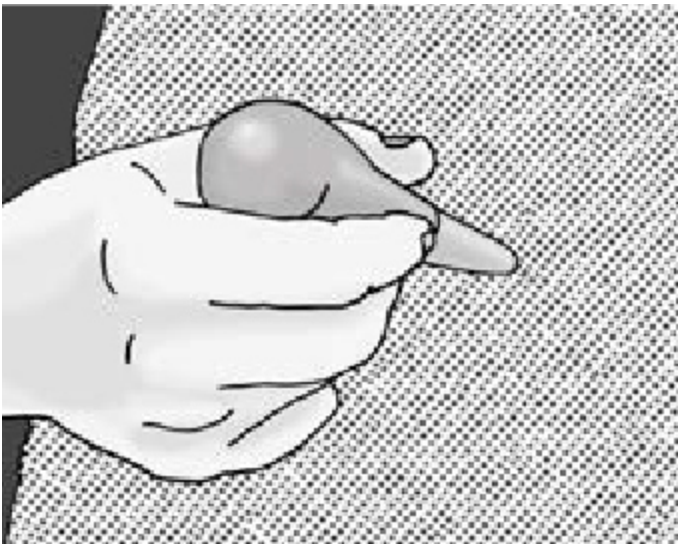
Fabric with a looser weave, like burlap or linen, is best. The process involves pushing or pulling thicker fabric pieces through the backing fabric, and your hand will become sore and tired if you have to force hundreds of pieces through a tightly woven backing. A more open weave will let you work much faster and more easily. In the U.K., burlap (also known as hessian) is still widely used. In the United States, crafters have steered toward backing fabrics that have more longevity, like linen.

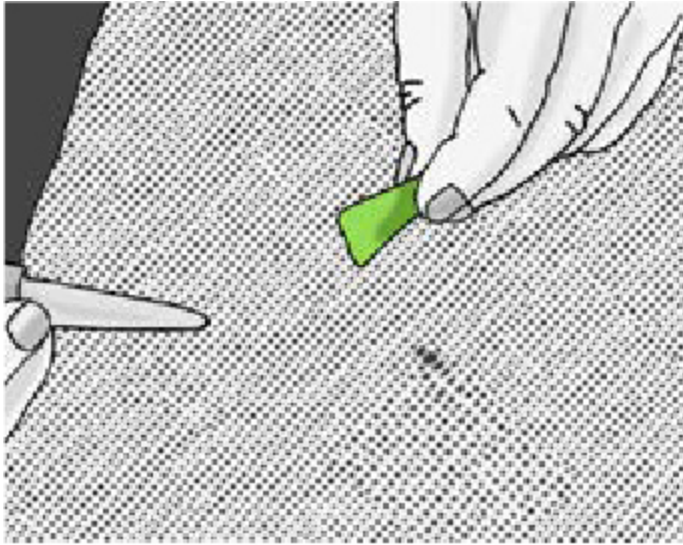




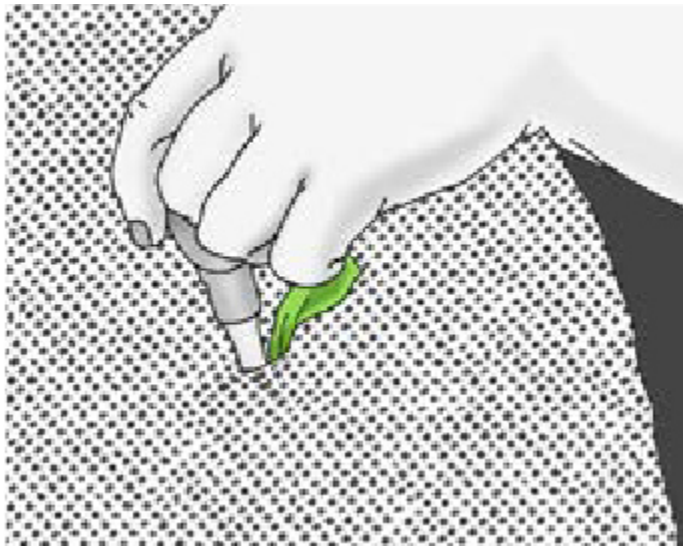
Even when working with a loose-weave fabric like linen, you'll first want to create a larger hole with the proddy tool so it's easy to poke the material into it. The hole will close up around the piece as you work, securing it.

HOW TO MAKE A PRODDY RUG

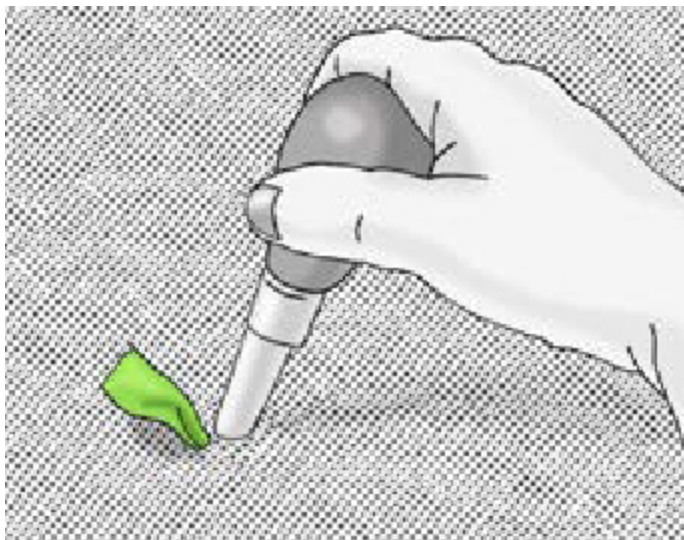




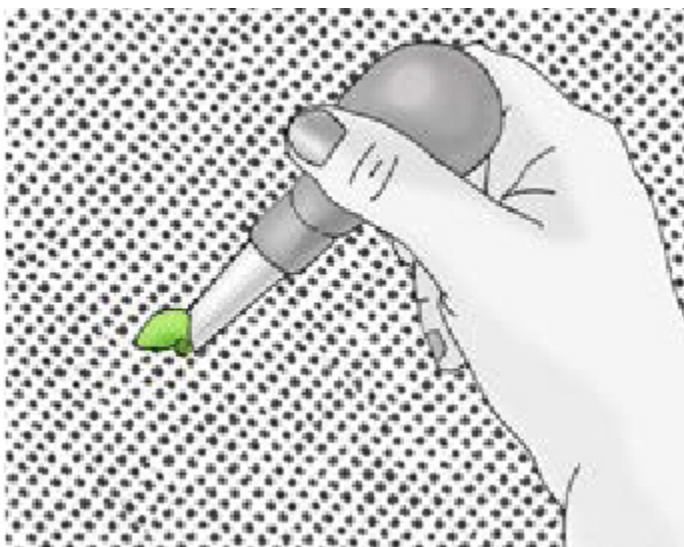
1. Poke the proddy tool into your backing material to open up a space to make it easier to push the fabric piece through the material.



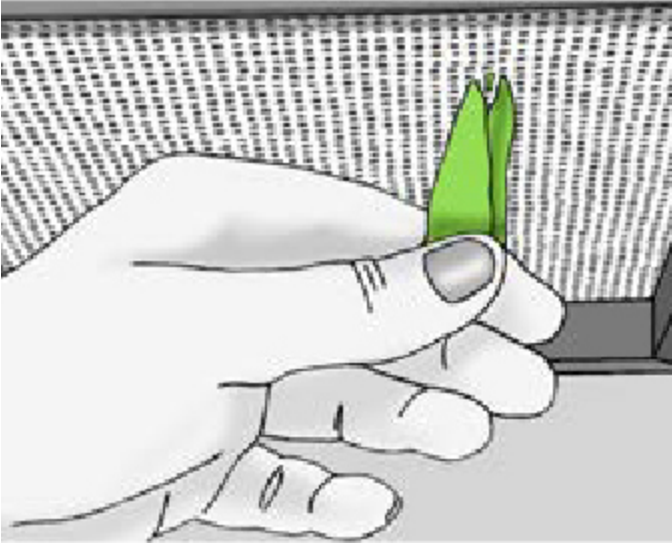
2. Poke one end of the fabric fabric piece into the hole and through to the other side.



3. Make a second hole in the backing fabric right next to the first hole.



4. Poke the other end of the fabric piece through the new hole.



5. Pull both ends gently from underneath to even them out.

Alternative Technique: Using the Spring Proddy Tool

If you want to try working from the other side by pulling fabric through from the back, you will use a spring proddy tool instead. I use the following technique, which is not the traditional spring proddy technique, but rather a beginner-friendly option. The tools available for purchase in the US tend to damage backing material when used in the traditional way.



1. Hold your fabric proddy piece ready beneath the backing fabric. Poke the end of the closed proddy tool through the backing fabric and release the clamp so the ends open.



2. Once you have the fabric proddy strip in place, clamp the tool's teeth together onto the fabric strip and pull.



3. Pull one end of the fabric proddy strip right up to the surface.

THE LATCH HOOK RUG

Practice Project:

LAMB'S TONGUE SAMPLER

Latch hook has a storied history and is one of the most approachable and recognizable techniques. I'll walk you through a brief history of the latch hook rug (from high art to craft kits), show you all the tips and tricks you need to get started, then teach you step-by-step how to construct and finish your own rug.

Follow the technique step-by-step with the pattern on here and similar colors to replicate the Lamb's Tongue Sampler practice project. Once you're comfortable with the technique, use it to create your own rug designs.

In approaching a latch project for this book, I thought about the myriad designs that had already been done, and how so many of them over the years leant toward the boisterous and kitschy. I decided I wanted to do something so traditional that it would seem unexpected as a latch hook design. A classic, wooly sheep surrounded by the lamb's tongue motif (the long scallops around the border) is just about as traditional as it gets.



Finished dimensions: 18" x 16" (45.7 x 40.6cm)

Tip:

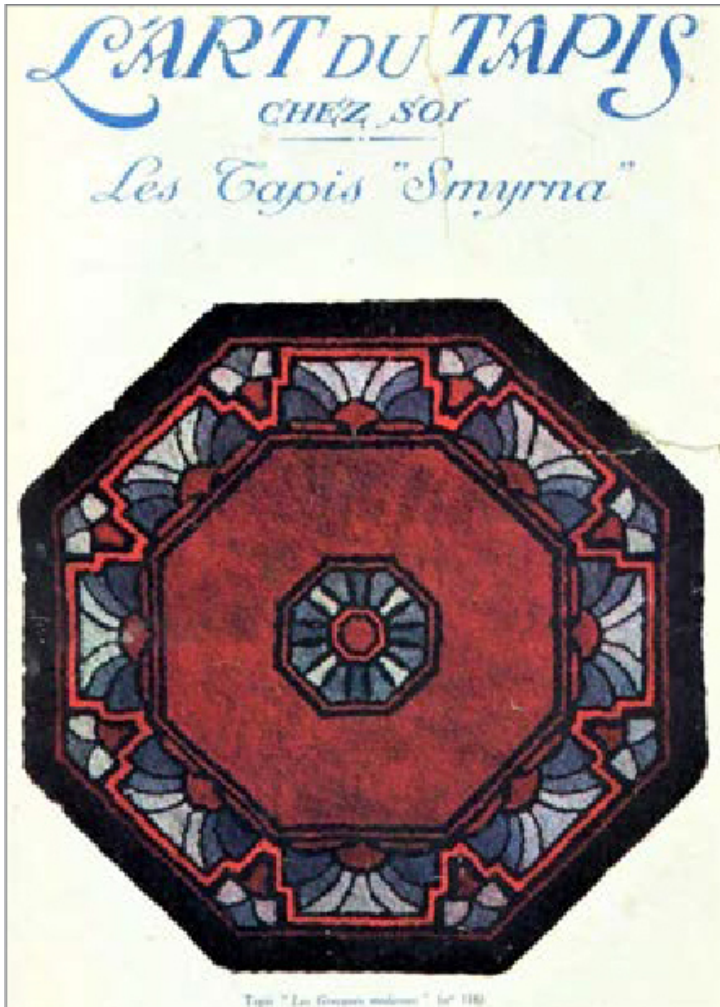
The lamb's tongue border is the perfect way to use up scraps and ends of yarn, as well. I included many textures and even color-changing yarns in the border of my rug to make it a true sampler.

Tools and Materials

- Latch hook
- 4560 pre-cut 2" (5.1cm) yarn pieces (or see [Cutting Your Own Yarn on here](#))
- 22" x 20" (55.9 x 50.8cm) rug mesh backing
- Scissors
- Pattern on [here](#), transferred to your backing material (see [here](#))

BACKGROUND

Latch hooking developed out of traditional rug hooking. On her excellent blog, *Latch Hook Heaven*, Sarah Hartwell charts the history of latch hooking, beginning with its inception as a needle form in the nineteenth century. In the 1920s, latch hooking evolved into the form we know today. The extraordinary designs of the time showcased in catalogs like the French *L'Art Du Tapis* (The Art of the Carpet) mirrored the art deco elements so popular in the art and architecture of the era.



A beautiful high-art design from an early copy of *L'Art Du Tapis*.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SARAH HARTWELL, *LATCH HOOK HEAVEN*, [HTTP://MESSYBEAST.COM/RUGMAKING/RUGMAKING-INDEX.HTM](http://messybeast.com/rugmaking/rugmaking-index.htm)

In the 1930s and 1940s, companies like British brand Readicut began to create full latch hook kits with backing, a toggled hook tool, and pre-cut wool (hence the name Readicut). Makers were no longer required to forage for supplies or bother with cutting the materials. Most of these kits included synthetic pre-cut yarn and would only work with a latch hook. They resulted in rugs with a high pile (shag) that could be clipped or “sheared” shorter to create a finer look. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s brands like Bernat and Shillcraft continued to put out thrilling catalogs with fashionable patterns and kits that ticked all the mid-century boxes: atomic abstracts, playing cards, tribal geometrics, and lush, exotic plants.

Somewhere around the 1970s, latch hooking was relegated to the bottom of the hierarchy of artsy rugmaking. The crafting fervor of this avocado and mustard moment in design history produced far too many olive and brown geometrics and moon-eyed owls. By the 1980s, latch hooking design degenerated to mostly rainbow-jumping unicorns and cartoon characters. This effectively branded the craft in the minds of many as a juvenile or lowbrow hobby.

CHOOSING YOUR BACKING GAUGE

Latch hook requires stiff rug mesh backing (see here). This backing is so stiff that you can't use a frame, nor do you need to. This is a huge plus for many people—latch hooking requires only an abbreviated supply list and is very portable.

I usually use rug mesh backing that has four holes per inch. It's a common gauge that works well with standard modern latch hooks. If you have a project or piece of backing that's a larger or smaller gauge, it will work just as well.

CHOOSING YOUR MATERIALS

Most kits include precut pieces of yarn, but if you're starting with your own original pattern or have bought a pattern that doesn't come with yarn, you have your choice of absolutely anything you want to use. You can basically use any material you can cut that will physically work in the toggle latch hook. Just remember, if your rug will be going

on the floor, make sure the material is durable. If it's going on the wall, you can pick all your favorites.

I latch hook with wool I've dyed, mohair, bouclé, T-shirt strips, and all kinds of novelty yarns. I often mix a couple strands of eyelash yarn with a piece of thick wool and hook them all together. This type of mix creates a field of stumpy, wooly colors with sprigs of crazy, glittery eyelash yarn peeping through (see [Using a Carrier on here](#)).

HOW MUCH YARN DO YOU NEED?

The simplest way to calculate how much yarn you need is to do a rough count. If your backing has about four holes per inch, for example, you'll need 16 pieces of yarn per square inch of backing. You can use this to estimate how many pieces of each color you'll need. With latch hooking, I tend to cut my pieces as I go to allow for more flexibility.



I used this crate of mixed yarns to make my *Late Summer, Cape Cod* latch hook rug (see [Using a Carrier to the right](#)).

If you're working with leftover scraps or small amounts and find yourself running out of material, think about mixing in a similar color of a different yarn or material. Try using nontraditional materials, as well, like strips of old T-shirts, nylons, shower curtains, or bedsheets. Nontraditional materials create a lot of interest and variety.

CUTTING YOUR OWN YARN

My favorite way to cut yarn is through a sort of Goldilocks method. I cut a snip of yarn and latch hook it. Does it look too short? Too tall? I experiment until the height looks “just right.” Then I cut a strip of cardboard to a width that matches this height, I wrap my yarn around it, and I cut tons of pieces quickly and evenly.

Using a Carrier

If you want to use materials with unusual textures (curly, very thin, hairy, fuzzy, etc.), you may need to work with the materials in different ways. I often double or triple the fibers, using two or three strands together to give these difficult fibers more integrity. Sometimes I use a carrier—a nice thick wool or acrylic I can match with the unusual fiber to latch hook it more easily. A carrier helps you incorporate pretty but troublesome materials.



My finished latch hook piece, *Late Summer, Cape Cod* (shown here), mixes less traditional materials with solid and predictable carriers.

This close-up shows how the less robust materials are supported by the

more traditional carrier yarns.



1. Hold the end of the yarn at the bottom and wrap the yarn around the cardboard strip a few times. Cut the yarn away from the skein.



2. Cut the wrapped yarn along the edge of the cardboard strip to create yarn pieces of equal lengths.

Vintage Yarn Cutters

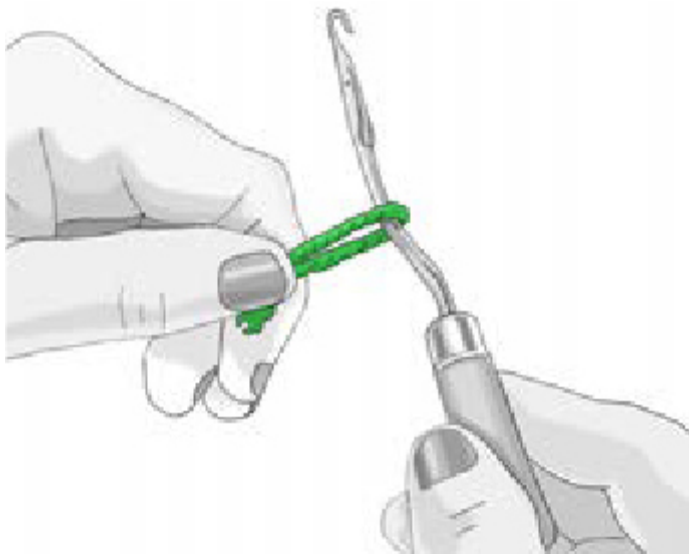
A lot of companies used to sell yarn-cutting gadgets and you can still find them online and in antique stores. These vintage cutters are a little like cheese graters—you put the yarn in where indicated, then wind them to cut equal-length pieces.

This is a fun way to cut yarn if you're a lover of vintage gadgets, but these tools aren't super practical. The yarn often tangles and replacing the unique blades when they wear out will involve some difficulty. But they are fun collectibles!

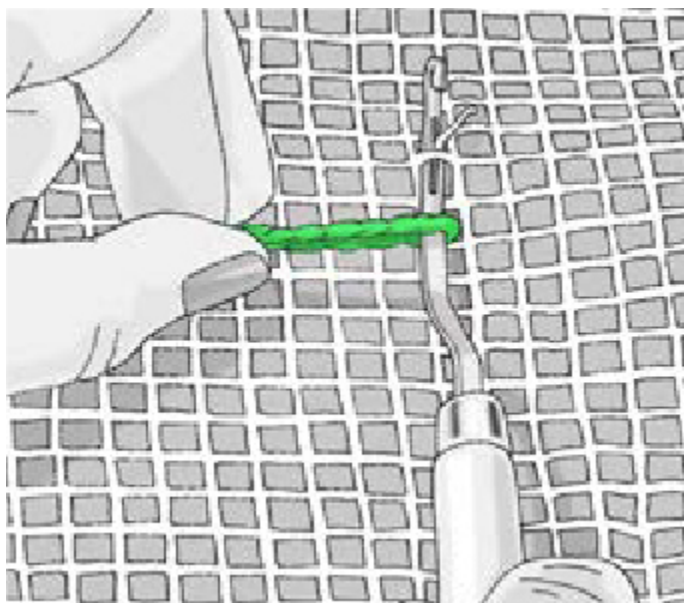


As you wind the yarn with the cutter, small uniform cuts fall away.

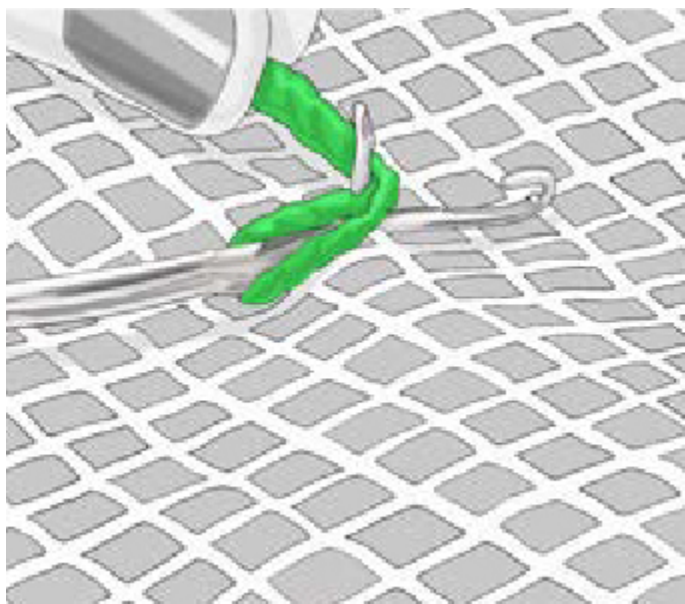
HOW TO LATCH HOOK



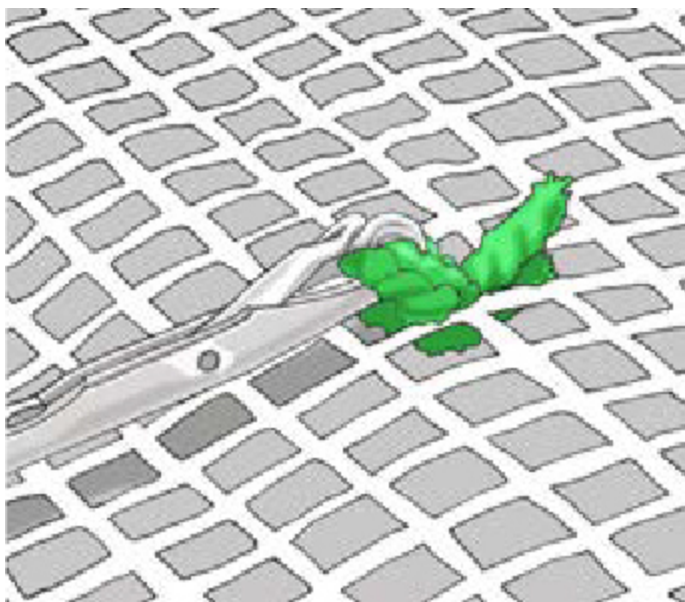
1. Wrap your piece of yarn around the neck of your latched hook as shown.



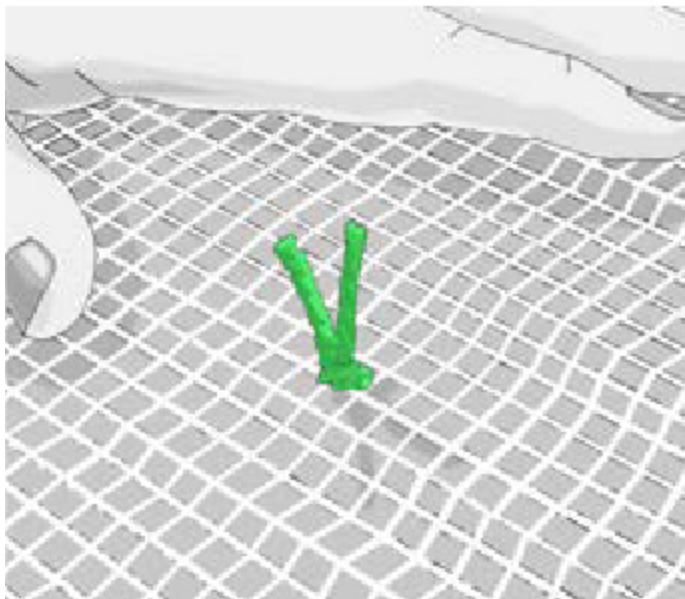
2. Push the hook and toggle up through a grid hole.



3. Wrap the two ends of the yarn around and to the left of the open toggle.



4. Pull down and allow the toggle to close and lock in the yarn ends. Then pull the closed hook back through the grid hole.



5. The closed toggle hook will pull the locked-in yarn ends through the yarn loop to form a knot.

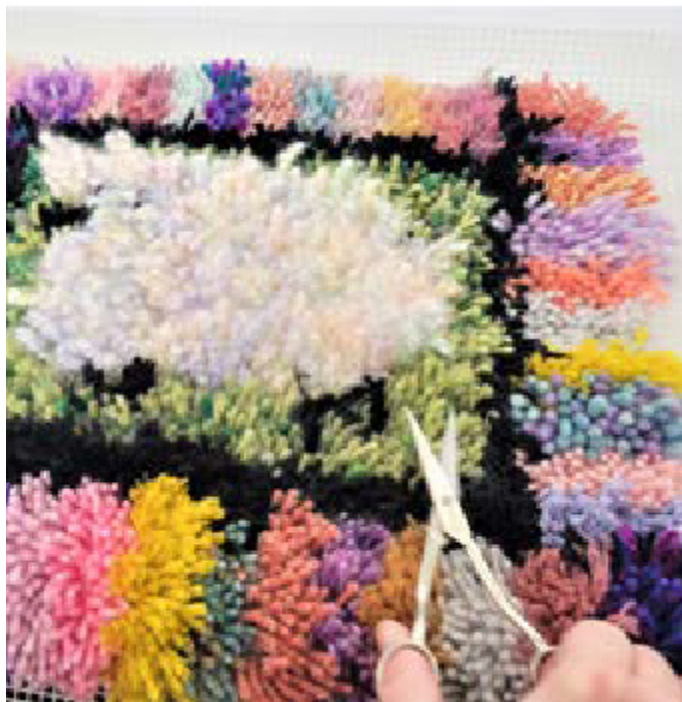
FINISHING YOUR LATCH HOOK RUG

Whether you want to create a clean, even pile or a wild and wooly effect, you have to think about how (or whether) to trim the height on your finished piece. Evenly cutting will give your work an eerily manufactured look that's crisp and perfect. No finishing clipping will leave you with a wilder pile. Some artists sculpt their latch hook pieces in a way similar to the Waldoboro traditional rug hooking style (see here). This is known as the Tondilo style.

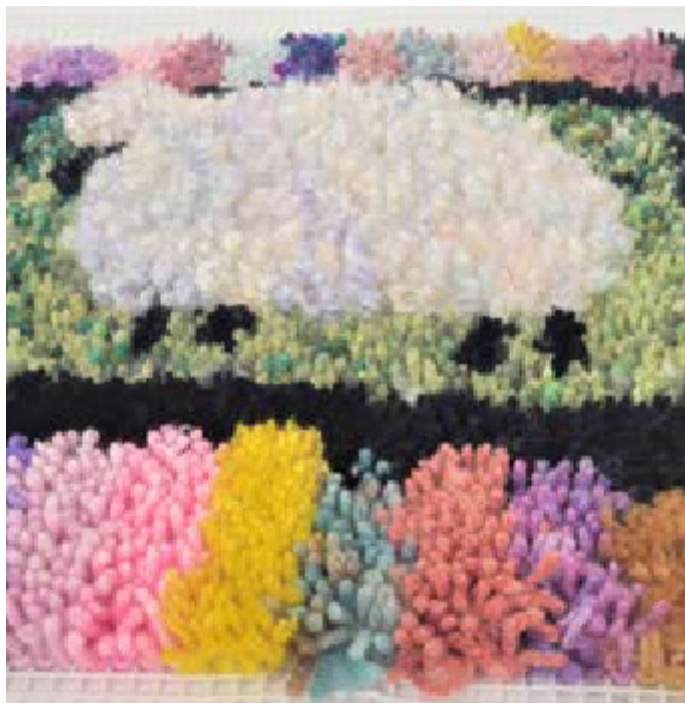
Most often I do a combination. I don't tend to sculpt in the Tondilo style, but I do like to exaggerate elements of the design, and I do this with height differences. In the Lamb's Tongue Sampler practice project on here, I latch hooked the sheep in a curly rainbow-tinted white yarn that had a springy corkscrew quality. I wanted this to stand out against the green grass, so I clipped the grass shorter while leaving the body of the sheep untouched.



In the Lamb's Tongue Sampler practice project on here, I sheared the green lawn close and left the rainbow-tinted high-twist yarn of the sheep's body thick and wild.



I often use bent scissors to clip my backgrounds. They're an expensive, but worthwhile, splurge.



The difference between the pile of the sheep's body and the trimmed pile of the background emphasizes the roundness and wooliness of the sheep.

Easy Touch-Ups

Sometimes when you step back from a latch hook project, it might seem like the colors are a little bit off. There is no need to remove any of your knots. Think about how the rug mesh backing is a grid and how the knots are latched onto the top and bottom edges of the grid holes. You can fix small issues by adding extra knots to the empty side edges of the grid holes.



You can add extra knots to the empty sides of your grid holes to alter and enhance what you've already latched to create the perfect blend of colors in all the right places.

THE LOOPED LATCH RUG

Practice Project:

VALENTINE BOUQUET

In this section, I'll walk you through a brief overview of the looped latch technique and explore the types of fabrics and materials that can be used for looped latch. I've also included a general step-by-step guide for the looped latch technique. Follow the technique step-by-step with the pattern on here and similar materials to create the Valentine Bouquet practice project. Once you're comfortable with the technique, use it to create your own rug designs.

Everything old is new again. I find so many antique rugs that are desperately in need of repair and sometimes the amount of TLC needed is so much that I end up just stabilizing them and keeping them for decorative use only. These unique pieces deserve to be celebrated, though, and since antique and primitive designs lend themselves best to looped latch hooking, I used this project as an opportunity to recreate and pay loving tribute to a classic design.



Finished dimensions: 23" x 14" (58.4 x 35.6cm)



I used this antique rug as the perfect inspiration for this practice project—a primitive-style looped latch hook rug.

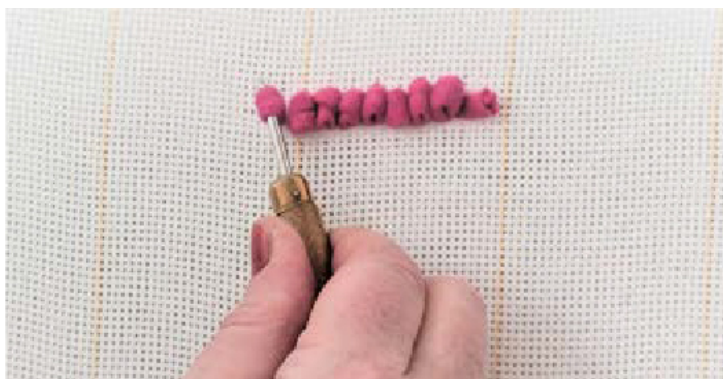
Tools and Materials

- Modified latch hook
- Working material
- 27" x 18" (68.6 x 45.7cm) rug mesh backing
- Scissors
- Pattern on [here](#), transferred to your backing material ([see here](#))

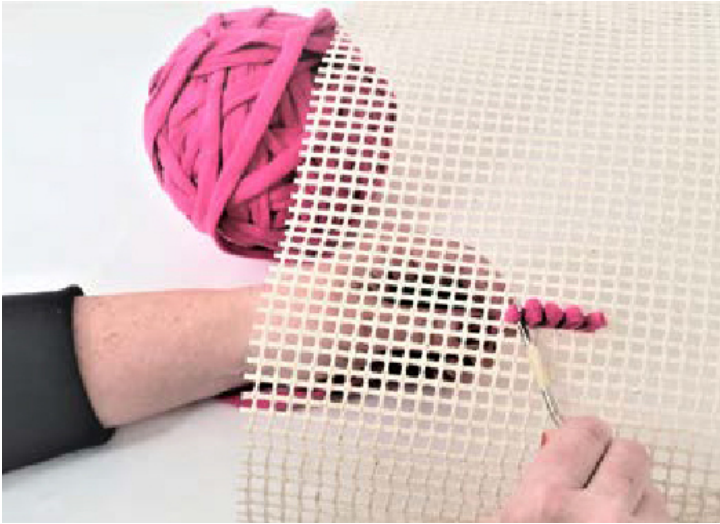
BACKGROUND

Looped latch is a hybrid of the other rug-making techniques, and for many people it represents the best of all hooking worlds. Looped latch is like traditional rug hooking but uses a modified latch hook and rug mesh backing rather than a cloth backing. I love this looped latch because it combines the loop-pulling technique I enjoy with a simple backing that doesn't require a frame. I also love antique rug styles, and the surest way to achieve this style is to use wide "primitive" strips. Working into a rug mesh backing creates the look of an antique hooked rug, but the process is much faster.

I use a latch hook for looped latch because I find it works best for me with the rug mesh backing, but the toggle presents a problem. I usually modify my latch hook when creating looped latch pieces by taping the toggle in place. If you plan to solely use your latch hook for looped latch, you can also break off the toggle entirely.



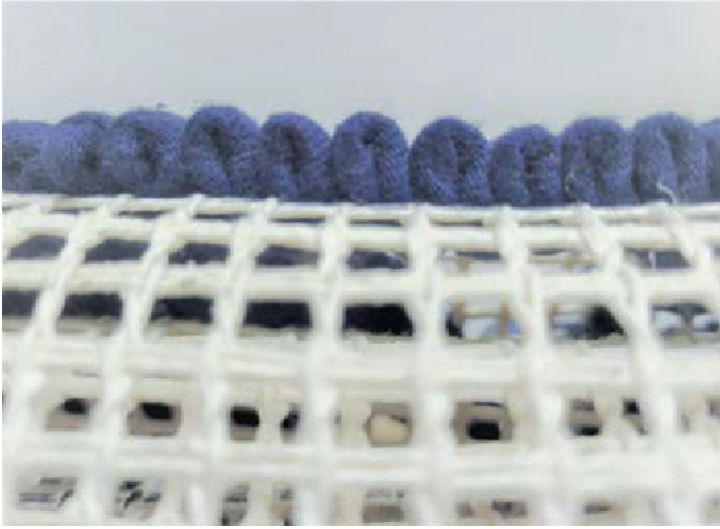
Traditional rug hooking uses a hook that is more like a crochet hook and woven fabric with much smaller holes.



Looped latch hooking uses any type of hook (I use a modified latch hook) and rug mesh backing with larger holes.



Latch hook creates a tall surface with knotted pre-cut pieces of material.



Looped latch creates shorter loops created with continuous strips of material.

WHICH FABRICS CAN YOU USE?

Rug mesh backing holds its shape well and is easy to find. The main feature of this backing is the big windowpane gauge. When you are using this type of backing, you can pull through much thicker and difficult-to-work-with fabrics (simply because the holes are bigger). Many wools, for instance, are woven so loosely that they are too difficult to work with in traditional rug hooking projects. Many novelty yarns are too difficult to work with in traditional rug hooking or latch hook, as well. And many fibers are too thick or unstable to pull through fabric backings but work well in a rug mesh backing.



For the Valentine Bouquet practice project on here, I used extra-wide strips and materials that are difficult to work with in tighter, woven backings.



Thick paisleys “hook up” in unique ways but, since they are made up of many thin threads, they require special care.



Cut difficult materials like paisley into wide strips with your scissors and save them for looped latch projects. Cutting them into wider strips makes them easier to handle, and looped latch allows you to see more of the print on the surface of each loop.



As your project progresses, you will probably need to add materials that weren't in your original plan. It's good to stay flexible and let your piece evolve spontaneously.





These materials are a few that are difficult to use in tighter backings. Top row, left to right: strips from a sweater, stretchy synthetic velvet, and sari ribbon. Bottom row, left to right: silk taffeta, a very loosely woven wool, and eyelash yarn with a thicker yarn carrier.

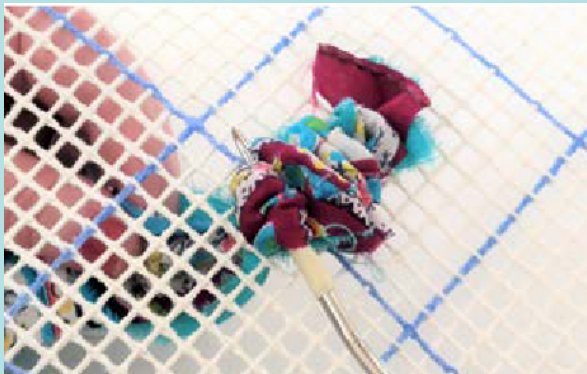
Using a Carrier

Thicker and difficult materials work well with this technique, but so can very thin materials. I love to use silk neckties and scarves for dying and for rug making. They are colorful and capable of creating a unique look (similar to paisley). But, like paisley, they can be fiddly and prone to unraveling.

Thin materials hooked into a large-scale backing can look deflated and won't be secure, but you can cut them into inch-wide strips and hook them with a more solid carrier fabric. A piece of thicker fabric placed under your problematic material acts as a carrier to give the loops more body, more stability, and more integrity. You can use any fabric as a carrier—sometimes just doubling up the thin fabric is enough. The only goal is to create plump loops that are secure in the backing.

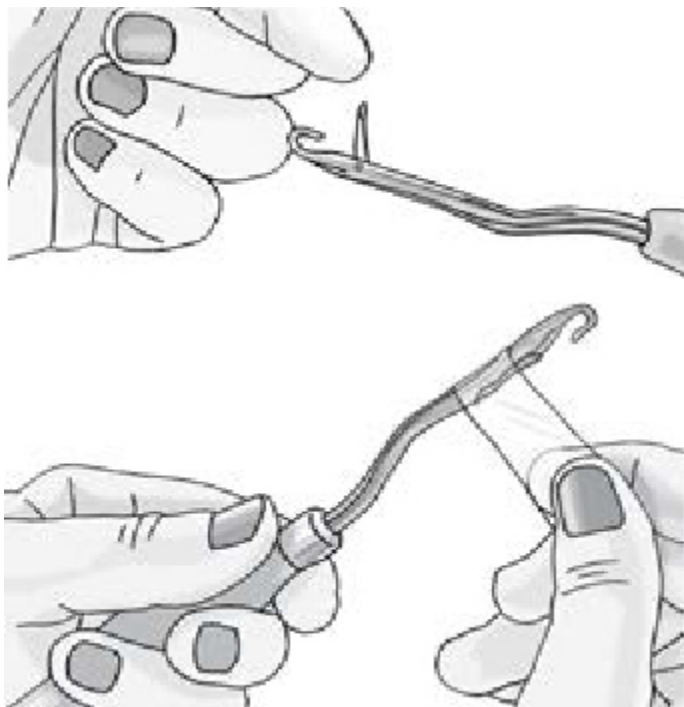


Here I'm using a solid cotton as a carrier to make this very thin scarf fabric work for looping.

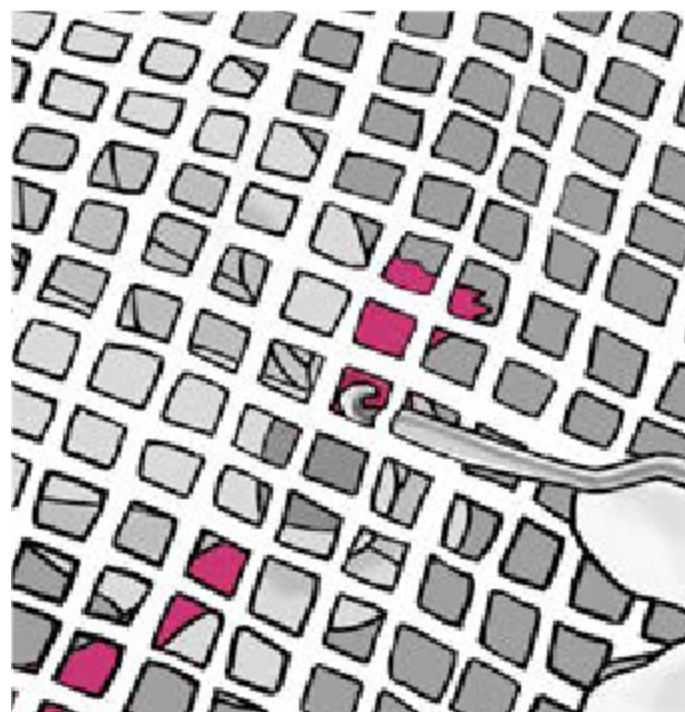


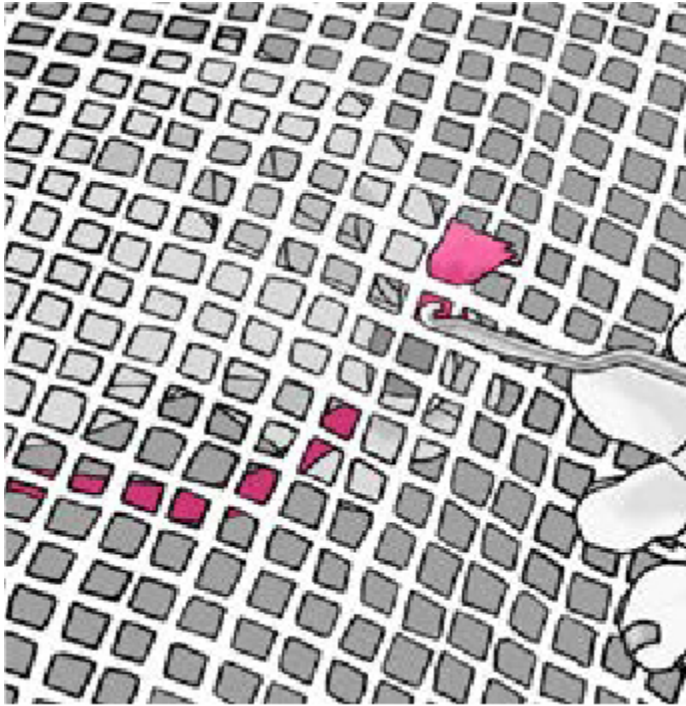
The carrier will always show a little bit, so be sure to use colors that work well together.

HOW TO MAKE A LOOPED LATCH RUG

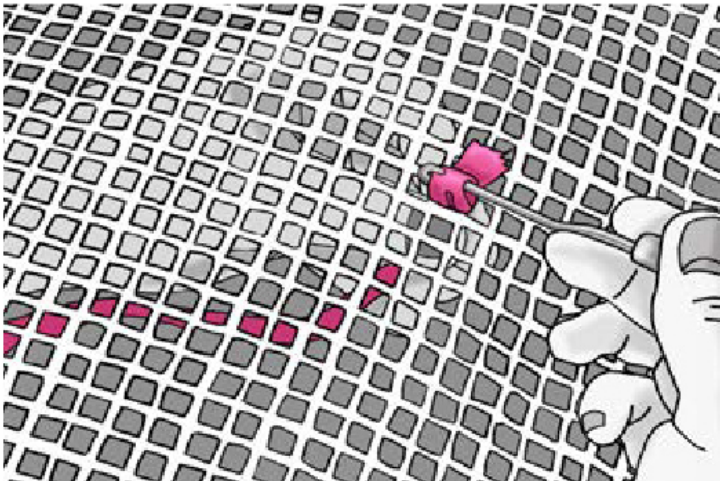


1. If you're using a latch hook, tape the toggle to the shaft to keep it out of the way.



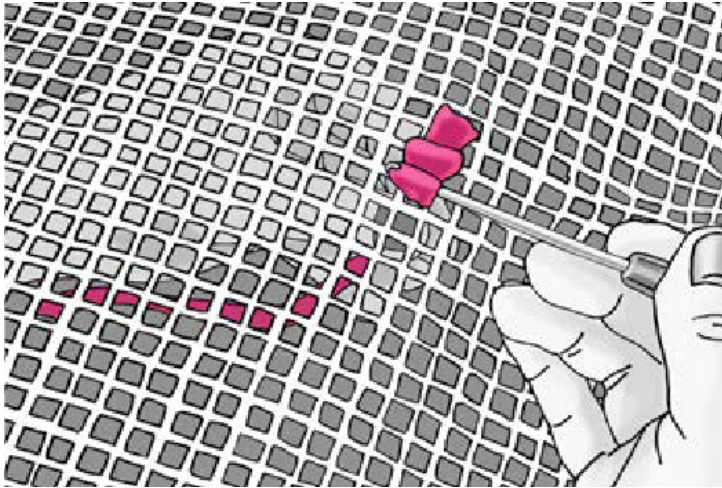


2. Hold your hook in your dominant hand and hold the wide strip of fabric underneath the backing with your other hand. Use the hook to pull the end of the strip up through a hole in the rug mesh backing.



3. Use the hook to pull a loop of the fabric strip through the next hole

in the rug mesh backing. The height of the loop should equal the width of the fabric strip.



4. Continue to make loops in each subsequent hole in the rug mesh backing until you want to change colors or reach the end of your row. If you are hooking shapes rather than lines, just keep creating loops until you fill the area.

Tip:

Wider is better for looped latch—you want each loop to be fat enough that it securely nestles into rug mesh backing. Rip cottons and lightweight fabrics to at least 1" (2.5cm) wide and wool or bulkier fabrics to at least ½" (1.3cm) wide and you'll never need to worry about the loops coming out!

THE LOCKER HOOKED RUG

Practice Project:

MATCHBOX MANSION

Locker hooked rugs have the look of a traditional hooked rug with the security of “locking” cord. In this section, we’ll go over a brief history of locker hooking, then I’ll show you how locker hooking is different from the other hooked designs. Finally, I’ll teach you step-by-step how to construct and finish your own rug.

Follow the technique step-by-step with the pattern on here and similar materials to create the Matchbox Mansion practice project. Once you’re comfortable with the technique, use it to create your own rug designs.

I often browse for old textile treasures online and one day I stumbled upon a simple quilt block that stopped me in my tracks. This homely mix of old calicos became the inspiration for this locker hook project—I even used busy calico prints and solids in the same places as the inspiration block, knowing the locker hook technique would create the same sense of gentle busyness.



Finished dimensions: 18" x 18" (45.7 x 45.7cm)



The vintage quilt block that inspired this project has its own quaint charm. I wanted to capture that feeling with a bit more texture.

Tools and Materials

- Locker hook
- Working material
- Thin twine, string, cord, or yarn
- 22" × 22" (55.9 × 55.9cm) rug mesh backing
- Scissors
- Pattern on [here](#), transferred to your backing material ([see here](#))

BACKGROUND

Locker hooking is a twist on traditional rug hooking that involves not just pulling loops up through a backing but locking them into place by tunneling a piece of twine underneath. Running twine or cord under the loops locks them on top of the surface meaning you can use thinner

materials like yarn without it unraveling from the backing.

The locker hook technique likely began in Britain around 1920 and reached its zenith in the post-Depression years, spreading to the U.S in the 1940s. These inter-war years made thrift crafts popular out of necessity.

CHOOSING BACKING AND MATERIALS

This technique uses the same rug mesh backing used for latch hook and looped latch. It's a coarse grid with large windowpane openings that is stiff, so it doesn't require a frame. For locker hooking, most rug makers use mesh with 3.75 squares per inch and fabric strips that are around $\frac{3}{4}$ "–1" (1.9–2.5cm) wide. If you plan on locker hooking with thinner strips or thinner yarn, you will want to use a backing with smaller holes (more holes per inch).

If a material fits through the backing holes, you can use it, just be conscious of durability if you intend to use your rug for foot traffic. Beautiful locker hooked wall hangings, table runners, pillows, and other home accessories can be made using specialty fabrics like raw silks, stretch velvet, and sari ribbon, as well novelty yarns like eyelash, metallics, and bouclé.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT LOCKER HOOKING

Because of the open gauge of the backing, and because you're pulling through individual loops and locking them into place, the finished overall look of locker hooking can be somewhat pixelated. You're also working in a series of connected loops, creating a lot more directional flow than you'd find in other forms of rug making. These directional lines create a textured look that mimics woven textiles. Your locker hook acts much like a shuttle does in the weaving process.

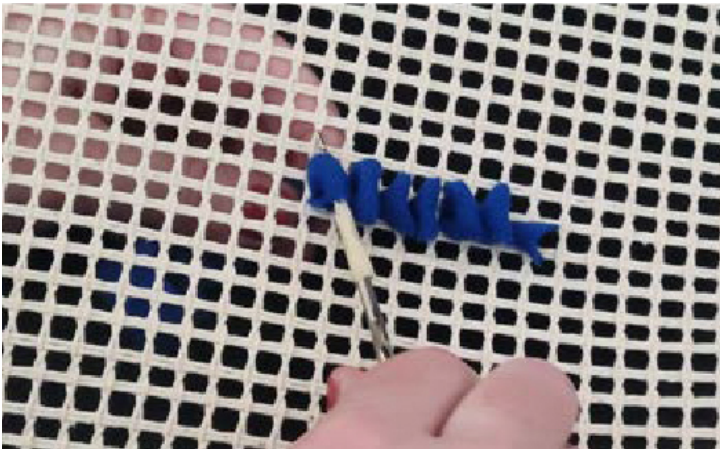
Strong lines and geometric patterns are some of the hallmarks of locker hooking. Having said that, it is also possible to pull your loops up to create diagonals and more circular and organic patterns. In the example project for this chapter, I did both. I hooked straight lines in the sky and grass, but for the shrubs and the flowering hedge I created wild, doodle-style lines. With this form of rug making more than any other, directional lines are apparent. You can easily break up your straight lines by adding some organic twists and turns.

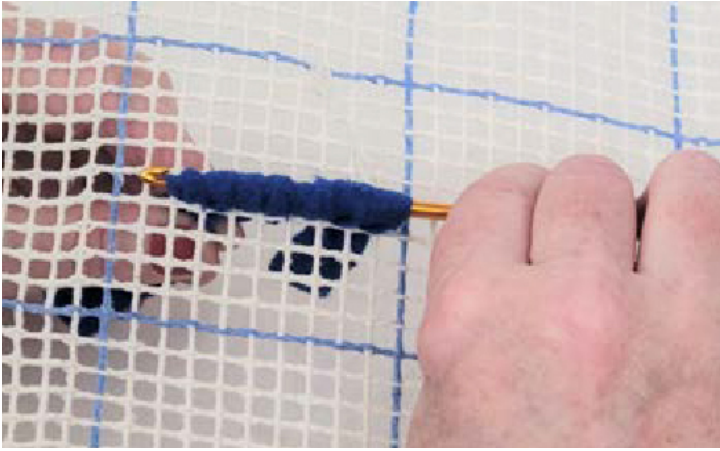


A rug mesh backing, twine suitable for locker hooking, and the locker hook itself, which looks much like a crochet hook with a large open eye on the end.



I wanted the large sky in this piece to look neat and have directional flow to contrast with the wilder flowering hedges below. I worked horizontally to create these even rows.





The difference between looped latch on the left and locker hooking on the right is easy to spot.

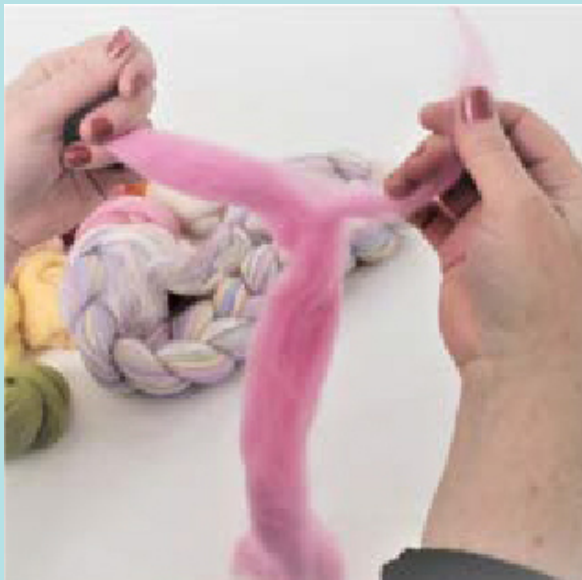
A Unique Twist—Australian Locker Hooking

You may have heard of Australian locker hooking, but how is Australian locker hooking different from traditional locker hooking? The only difference is the material! Traditional locker hooked projects are made with finished fibers, like yarn and fabric while Australian locker hooked projects are made with unfinished, unspun fibers, like wool roving.

This offshoot began in 1972 when an Australian traveling in Ireland brought some locker hooks home for his fiber artist mother, Patricia Benson. She set her mind to introducing the technique to Australian makers using the inexpensive materials that were plentiful and practical in her immediate surroundings: freshly sheared unspun wool.



While you might not have a farm full of sheep, natural and dyed wool roving is very easy to acquire from craft supply and yarn stores.

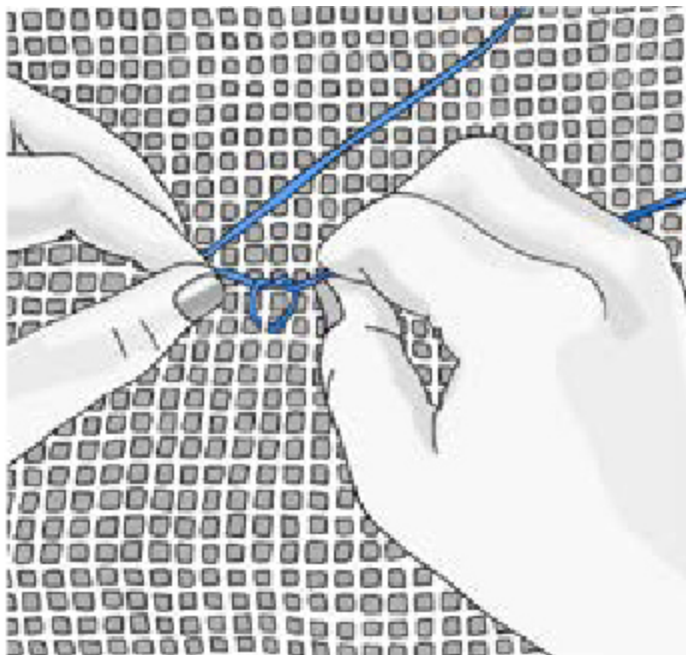


To work with wool roving, simply pull off a piece and twist it a bit in your fingers to give it more tensile strength. You can use it with the technique in the How to Locker Hook section on here, just like fabric strips or yarn.

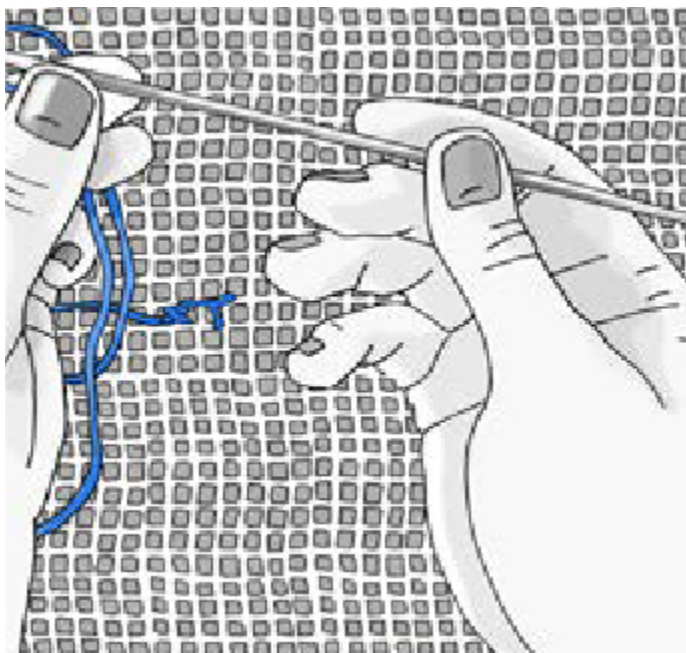


Locker hooked roving has beautiful loft and luminosity. It is amazingly fun, tidy, and satisfying to work with.

HOW TO LOCKER HOOK



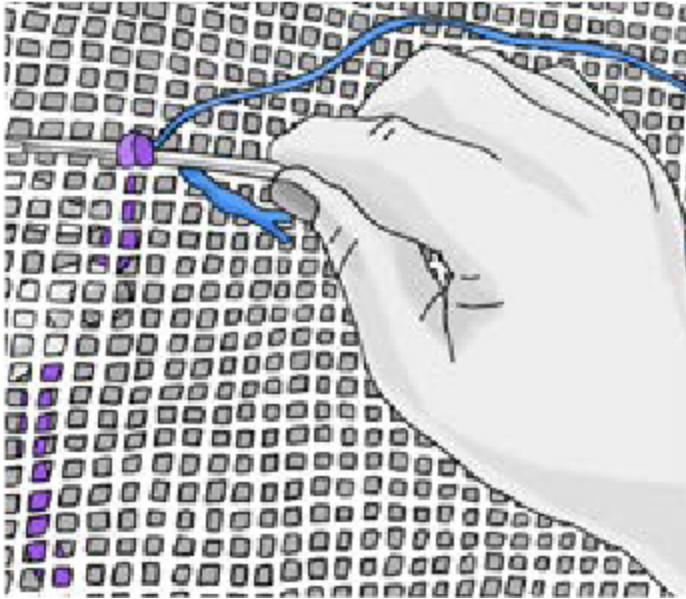
1. Tie the twine to the top of rug mesh backing where you plan to start.



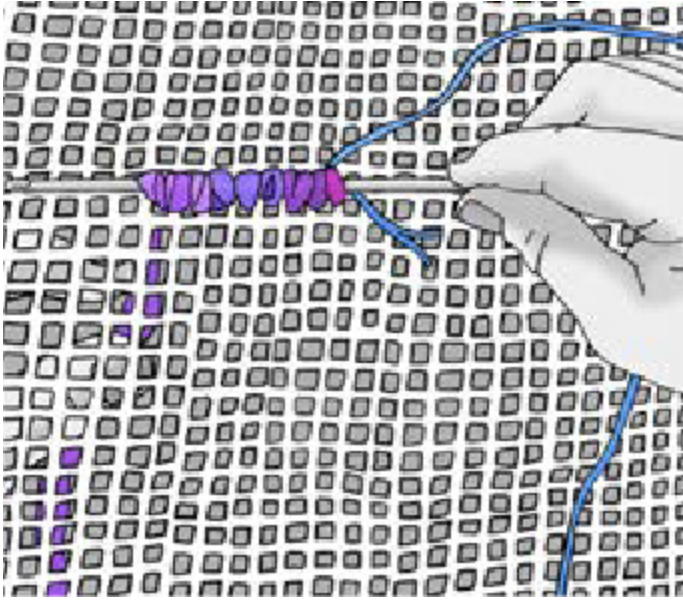
2. Thread the other end of the twine through the eye of the locker hook.

Tip:

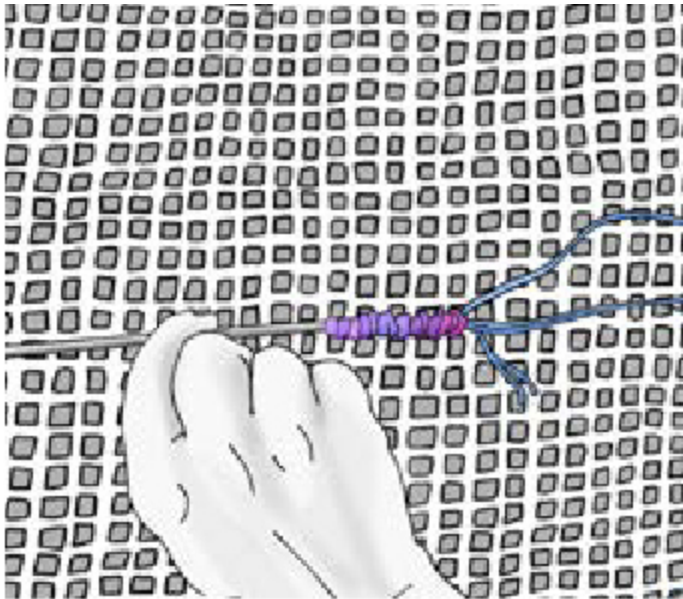
The shorter you keep your loops, the neater your piece will look. The taller the loops, the wilder and more popcorn-like your piece will become. Neither style is right or wrong, and you can even mix tall and short loops in your designs.



3. Hold the hook in your dominant hand and hold the fabric strip under the rug mesh backing with your other hand. Push the hook through the hole in the backing, hook the fabric strip, and pull up a loop.

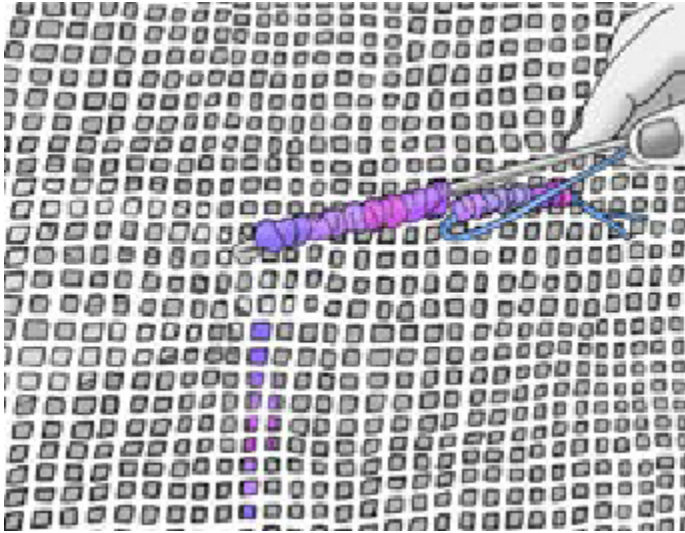


4. Continue pulling up loops, keeping your locker hook between the hooks and the rug mesh backing.



5. Once you finish the row of loops, pull the locker hook completely through to “tunnel” the twine under the loops and “lock” them onto the

backing.



6. Once you pull the twine through, you can immediately start again, repeating the same steps. The starts and stops will blend seamlessly in the finished piece.

How do you know when you've finished your series of loops?
There is no set number at which to stop. I tend to stop when I hit the end of the shape I'm filling in, or when I feel like I have so many loops on my hook that it's getting hard to work with.



The front of Theresa Pulido's *Phoenix Rooster* piece, which she posted about on her blog at <https://www.gocolorcrazy.com/archives/2016/locker-hooking-a-rooster/>.



The back side of *Phoenix Rooster* clearly shows the abundance of tails that result from the locker hooking technique.

HOW TO FINISH THE BACK

You'll notice as you work that your piece looks neat and tidy on the front, but on the back it's a wild mess of tails. You haven't done anything wrong—this is simply a rug technique where you leave your tails on the back.

You have two choices:

1. You can pull the tails through to the front and hide them inside your loops.
2. You can clip the tails to between 1"–1½" (2.5-3.8cm) and leave them alone. Even if you are using your piece on the floor, the flat tails shouldn't create lumps.

No matter which option you choose for your tails, you can add a

backing panel (and even a frame if your piece is a wall hanging). Remember your loops are locked, so even if you only clip your tails, your piece won't unravel. Know that your piece is secure and finish it in the way that works with your style and how you plan to use the piece.

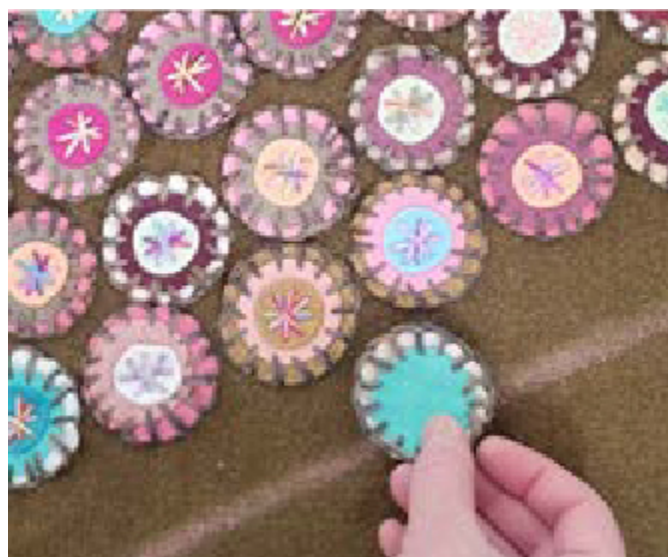
PENNY RUGS

Practice Project:

CIVIL WAR PENNIES

Penny rugs are the rag rugs with perhaps the most antique style. In this section, I'll walk you through a brief history of penny rugs and the fabrics that work well with the technique. I've also included a general step-by-step guide for blanket stitching, styling, and adding embellishments. Follow the technique step-by-step as written to create the Civil War Pennies practice project. Once you're comfortable with the technique, use it to create your own rug designs.

For this project, I decided to pay homage to where penny rugs started—the classic designs that grew from the thriftiness of makers living through the Civil War. I used an old army blanket (probably from World War II) as the backing to carry through the military tone I was aiming for.



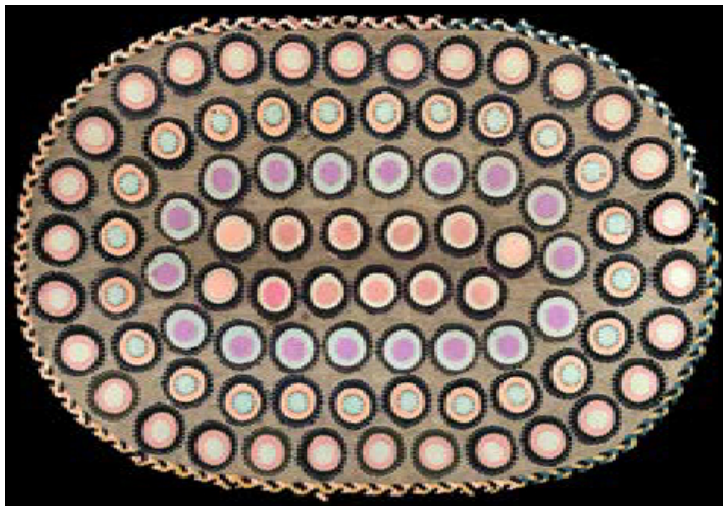


Finished dimensions: 34" x 20" (86.4 x 50.8cm)

Tools and Materials

- Sewing needle

- Thread, floss, or yarn
- 100 large 2" (5.1cm) fabric pennies
- 100 medium 1½" (3.8cm) fabric pennies
- 100 small 1" (2.5cm) fabric pennies
- 38" × 24" (96.5 × 61cm) backing material
- Scissors



This antique penny rug in soft, sherbet colors also has a braided border.

BACKGROUND

If you're interested in making rag rugs, there's a good chance you love collecting old stuff. You may already have stashes of wool, antique buttons, or old spools of thread sitting around the house. If you do, you're going to love penny rugs. Any tiny bits of wool you have that you think are too small to use, are perfect for this technique. A penny rug turns all of your itsy-bitsy scraps into a piece of history.

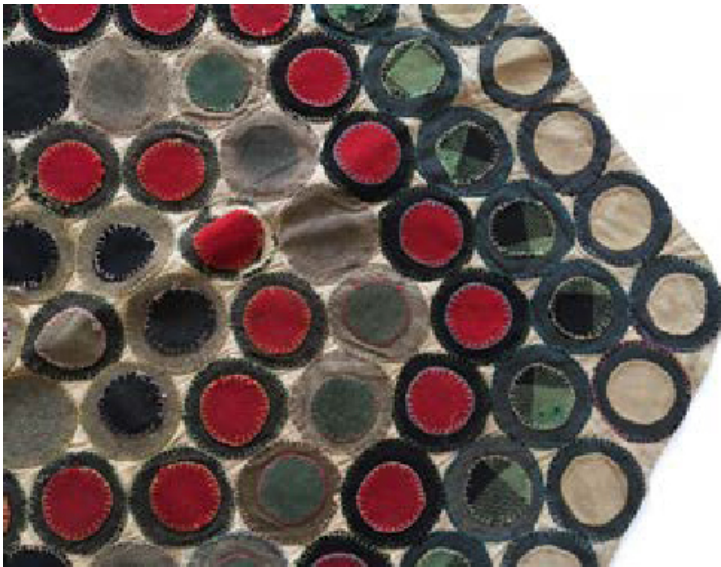
Also called button rugs, penny rugs began in the Civil War era when every scrap of fabric counted. Wool, felt, old uniforms, moth-eaten blankets—they all had value. In the mid-nineteenth century, coins were much larger than they are now, and pennies were well over 1" (2.5cm) across. Women would bust out all their scraps, use a penny as a template for the little circles, and then sew them together in stacks

to create patterns. Sometimes these rugs were long and rectangular, sometimes they were diamond- or flower-shaped, but all featured stacks of colorful fabric “pennies.”

Penny rugs are finished with a blanket stitch (a simple, fast stitch that’s most commonly used along the edges of heavy blankets). The blanket stitch is very durable, so early penny rugs stood up very well to regular floor use. This is a fast form of rugging and the simple design of circle upon circle is easy to make and easy to patch.

WHICH FABRICS WILL WORK?

There’s no need to stick with all solids and traditional wools for your penny rugs. The original idea was to use all scrap fabrics, not just cushy woolens. If you have old corduroys, quilting leftovers, denim, brocade, upholstery fabric, or really anything, consider it to be a penny possibility. Even materials that are very thin can be used for penny rugs if reinforced with interfacing. **Note:** Do not use fusible interfacing with synthetic fabrics.



This extraordinary penny rug from around 1860 is made from scrap homespun fabrics. You can see flannel and corduroy pennies that were lovingly sewn on so long ago.

PHOTO COURTESY OF BAKER & COMPANY ANTIQUES.



Thick wools are the “traditional” materials used for penny rugs, but this is another craft that developed out of thrift. You can truly use anything you can get your hands on to create your pieces.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SUZETTE KRUMMEL, WHITE PINE FOLK ART.

Don’t worry too much about fraying—the blanket stitch around the edges should keep it in check. The original purpose of blanket stitching was to patch things. It’s a strong wraparound stitch that will keep your fabric pennies hale and hardy.

Variation—The Lamb’s Tongue

You may have noticed that a lot of penny rugs have scalloped borders sewn underneath them. Each scallop is known as a “lamb’s tongue.” When placed on top of rugs rather than sewn under, they were meant to be used to wipe ink from quill pens. Pen wiper scallops were attached individually so they could be detached and replaced when soiled. Many thanks to Suzette Krummel for teaching me about these decorative pen wipers.



This rug made by Suzette Krummel features reproduction pen wipers around the border.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SUZETTE KRUMMEL, WHITE PINE FOLK ART.

PENNY TEMPLATES AND CUTTING

Finding the perfect penny template can be something of a scavenger hunt. You can trace around shot glasses or other circular items in your home or you can use a compass and scissors to draw and cut out paper or cardboard circle templates. Some makers even buy precut fabric pennies or use die cutting machines or scrapbooking cutters to make sure their pennies are consistent.



These wool felt sheets are a perfect penny material—just trace a template and cut!



When I start a new project, I like to separate my pennies by size and color so I can clearly see all my options.

CHOOSING A BACKING AND ARRANGEMENT

Sometimes you'll start with a beautiful backing material and choose penny colors to complement it. Sometimes you'll start with beautiful wool or plaid pennies and the backing is more of an afterthought. It doesn't matter which comes first. Once I've collected my pennies and

chosen my backing, I experiment with different designs.

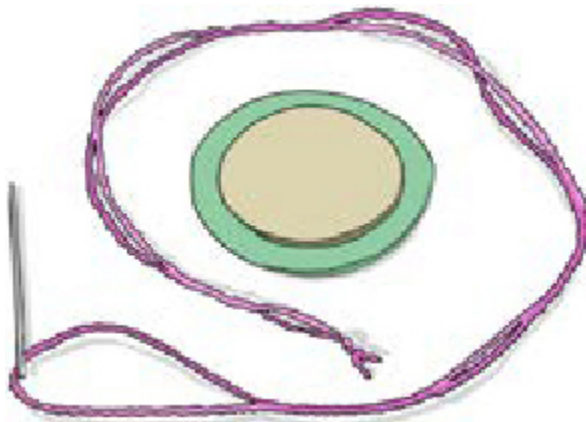


Suzette Krummel used a beautiful, patterned backing for this rug, adding an unusual design element that really makes it stand out.

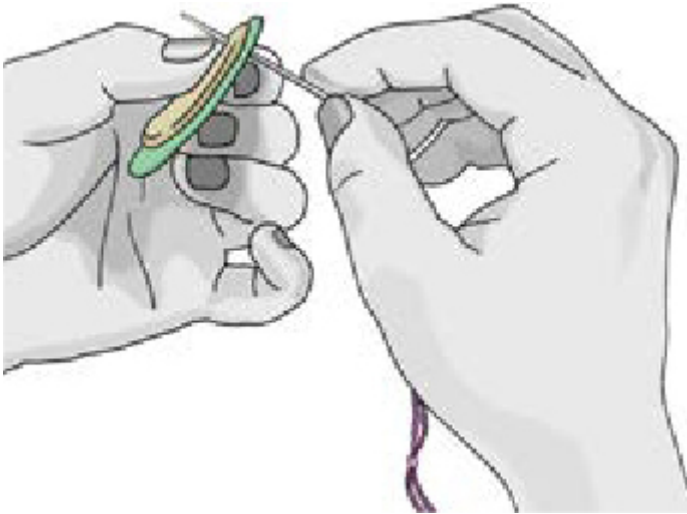


I place a safety pin in the middle of my backing so I can order the pennies evenly around it. Here I was deciding which color to use for the center (I created stacks of three pennies for this design). Although all the colors play a part, the color in the center is what will catch the eye first.

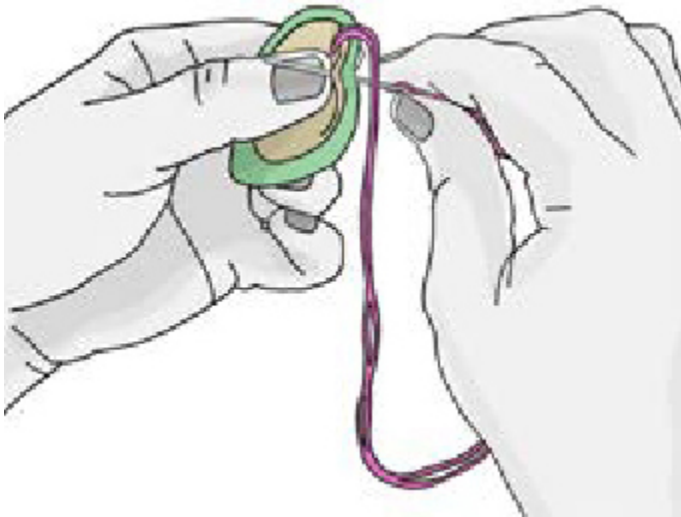
HOW TO BLANKET STITCH YOUR PENNIES



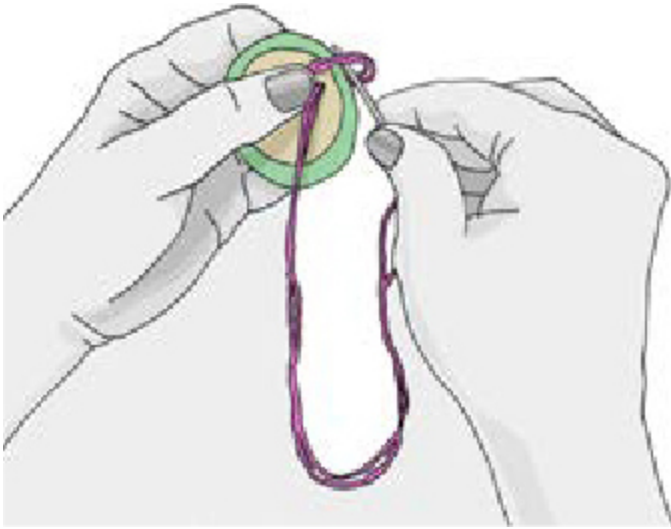
1. Thread the needle with your chosen thread or yarn and stack your fabric pennies with the smaller one centered on top of the larger one.



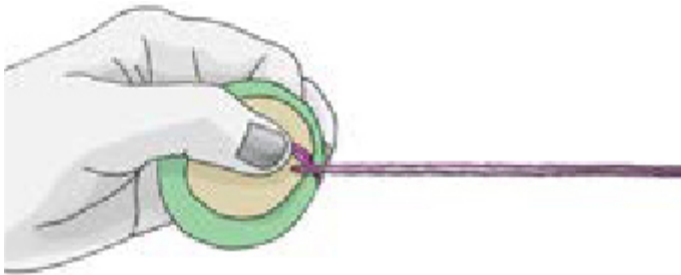
2. Poke the needle through both fabric pennies from the back. It should go through the larger penny and catch the edge of the smaller penny.



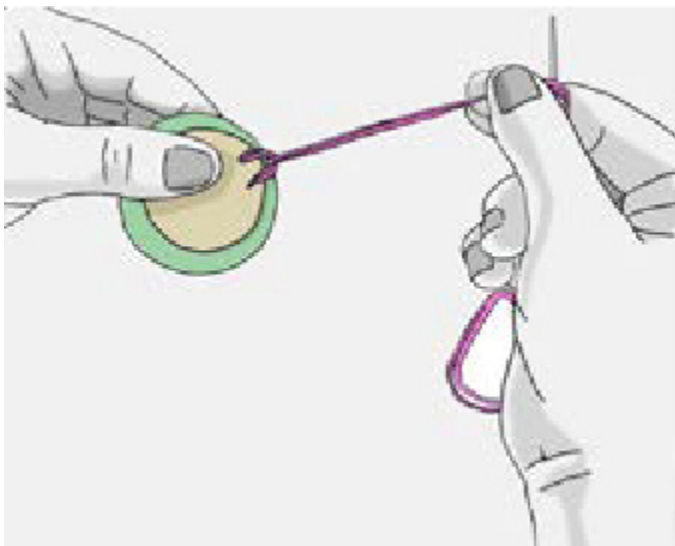
3. Pull the thread the whole way through, then poke the needle up through the back of both fabric pennies just beside the first hole.



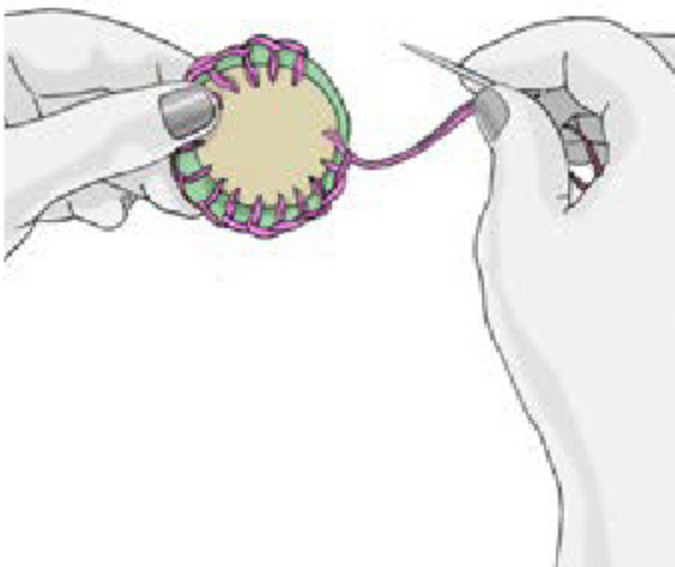
4. Pull the thread through, leaving a loose loop at the end. Place the end of the needle through this loop to “catch” the stitch.



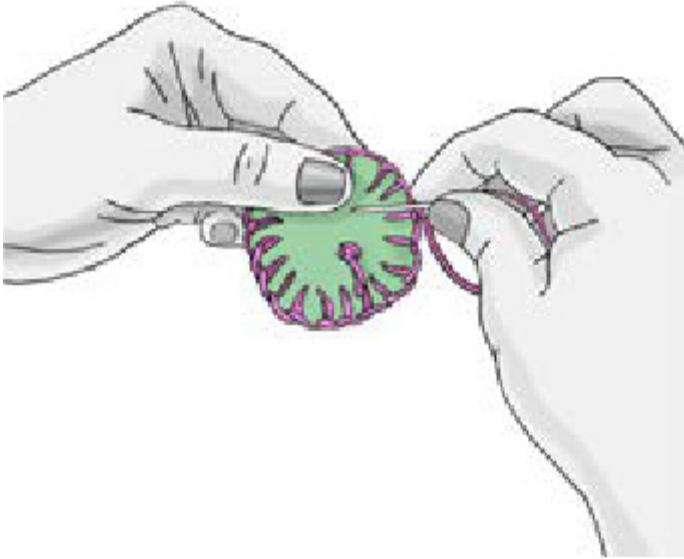
5. Finish pulling the thread through. Don’t pull it too tight or the edges will start to curl under.



6. Poke the needle up through the back of both fabric pennies about $\frac{1}{4}$ " (6.4mm) away from the first stitch. Repeat steps 4 and 5 to finish the blanket stitch.



7. Repeat step 6 the whole way around the outside edge of the penny stack.



8. Once you reach the end, carefully hide the thread in the back (just catching the needle in the back penny). Make a knot and cut the thread from the needle to finish.



Sometimes makers use unusual stitches for their penny rugs. The Victorians were notorious for “crazy quilts” sewn with decorative stitches, and this stitching sometimes found its way onto humbler projects, like the penny rug.

PHOTO COURTESY OF LAUREL LEAF FARM.

CHOOSING TACKING THREAD

Thread thickness and color are both very important to penny rugs. Thread creates the thinnest lines, and the options move up through thickness from there. You can use embroidery and lighter weight yarns, as well. I usually use sock-weight yarn (which is what I used for the example project) with a chenille or doll needle. A regular sewing needle will work with the thinner materials.

TACKING YOUR PENNIES

As long as you pick material that will provide stability to your pennies, which can become heavy, your penny rug backings can be any shape or size. For this project, I stitched my pennies down to an old army blanket. The blanket had quite a few holes, but with some careful attention, I was still able to use it in a way that created a stable rug base.



Once I'm happy with the pattern, I choose yarn or thread to sew on the centers. Since I plan to create a decorative star pattern on top, picking the right thread thickness and color is important.



Scale is important. This penny rug by Suzette Krummel is only 25" × 13" (63.5 × 33cm) so the pennies are quite small. She used single strands of embroidery floss to avoid overwhelming the small pieces.

Tip:

I sewed my pennies together first and then tacked them down to my backing. This allowed me greater design flexibility—I could play around with different color arrangements—but you can also stitch your pennies directly onto the mat if you prefer.



I use a regular sewing needle and thread to tack the pennies to the backing fabric. For this project I mixed up the tacking a bit—for some of the pennies I made a single tiny stitch in between every blanket-stitch in an accent color, and for others I used a similar color and hid the tacking stitches.

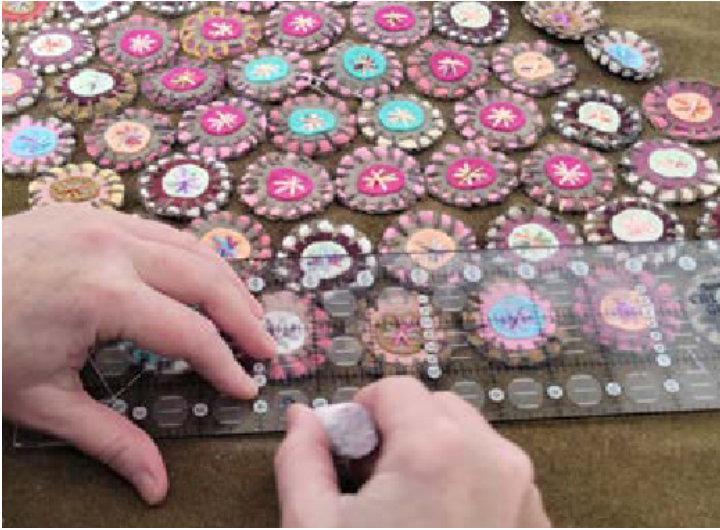


Each tacking stitch should catch the backing fabric and the outer edge of the penny.

FINISHING YOUR BACKING

Once you're happy with your rug design, you can finish it. I liked the diamond shape that had developed, so I used a clear, gridded quilting ruler and chalk to trace straight lines around the outside edges.

I'd already tacked my pennies to the backing while letting the design organically develop, but this process works just as well in reverse—you can cut your backing to the desired final shape and fill it in.



Quilting rulers work best for this job because you can see through them to create an even edge. But this is rag rug making, so the process can be more flexible. I couldn't find any tailor's chalk, so I used a piece of sidewalk chalk!



Once you're happy with your backing shape, you can cut it out.



I knew I wanted to have a final row of pennies overlapping the edge of my rug, so I had to make sure there was enough room to add this row.



It's not a necessity with this kind of heavy wool, but I liked the idea of doing a blanket stitch all the way around the edges. Hardly any of it will show once the final row of pennies is tacked on, but I'll know it's there.

Oh, My Stars!

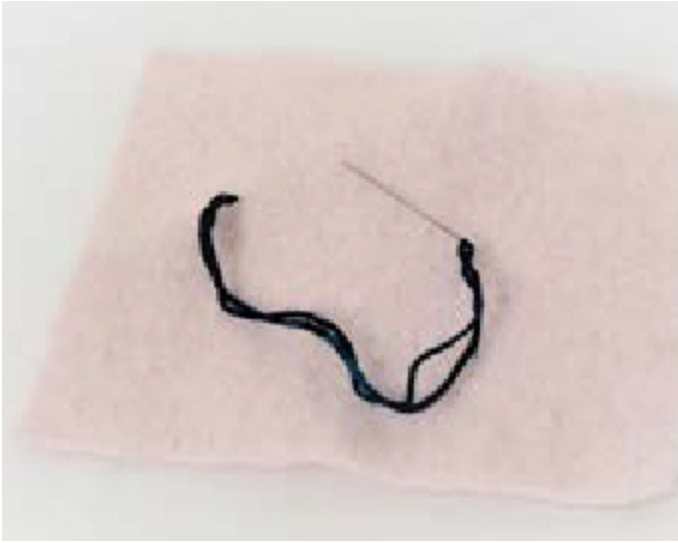
I added small stars to the centers of my penny stacks. For the pennies on the outside edge, I sewed these on after I'd tacked them to the backing. I used sock-weight yarn for this decorative element, as well.



I stitched these small pinwheels or stars on top of the pennies, right through the backing.

HOW TO MAKE A FRENCH KNOT

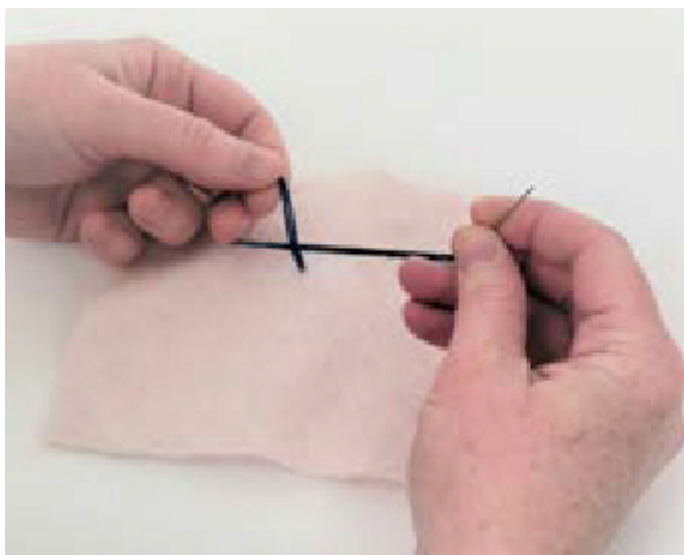
After adding the stars, I still felt there was something missing. I ended up adding blue French knots to the center of every star to create a final flourish. The process for making a French knot is the same whether you're working through a single layer of fabric or working through a backing and a stack of pennies.



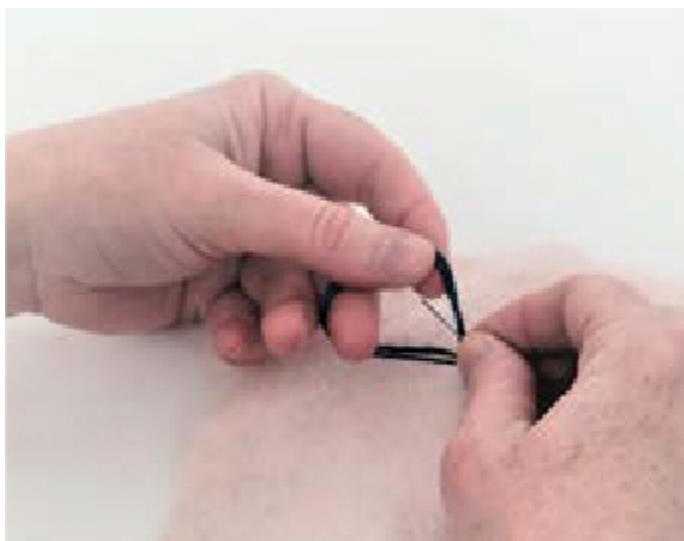
1. Thread your needle and make a knot at the end.

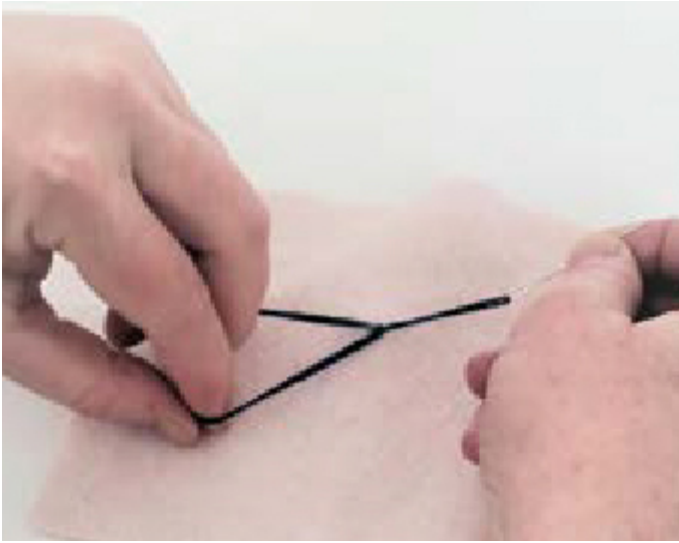


2. Poke the needle up through the back of your fabric and pull the thread through.

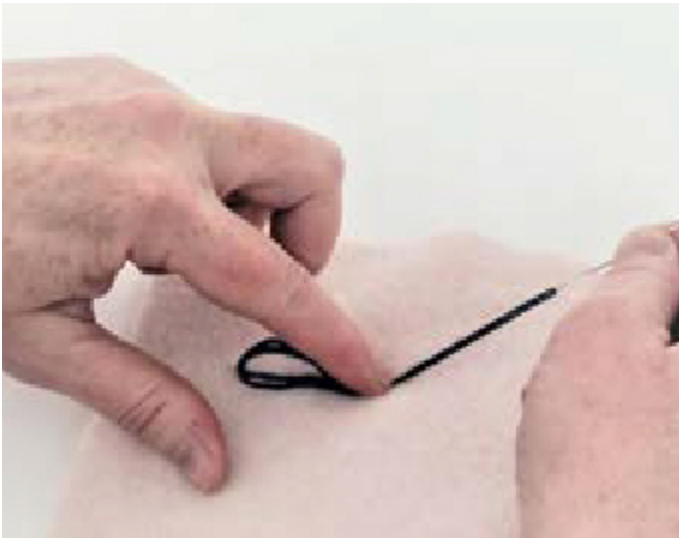


3. Create a loop by pulling the needle around behind the thread.

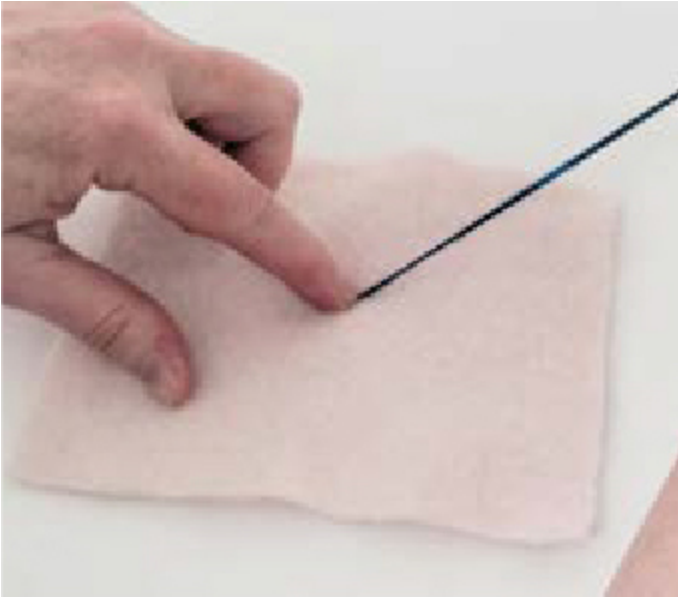




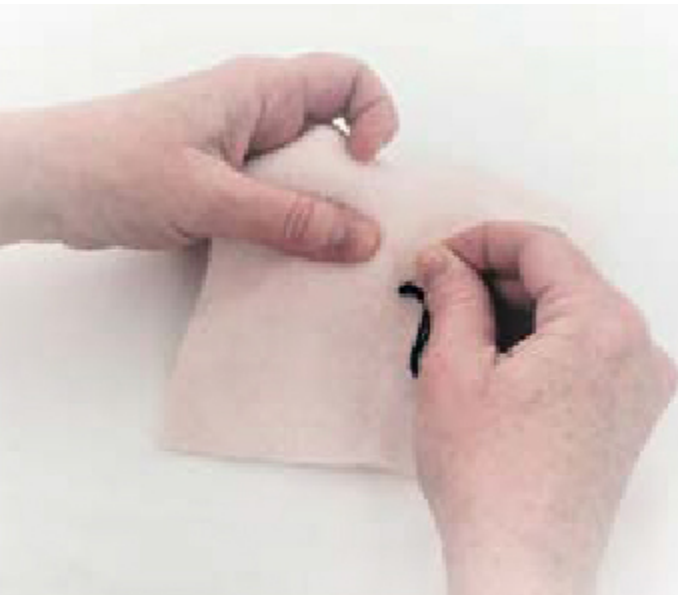
4. Push the needle through this loop, then pull it through, holding both loop and the thread on the needle flat and tight.



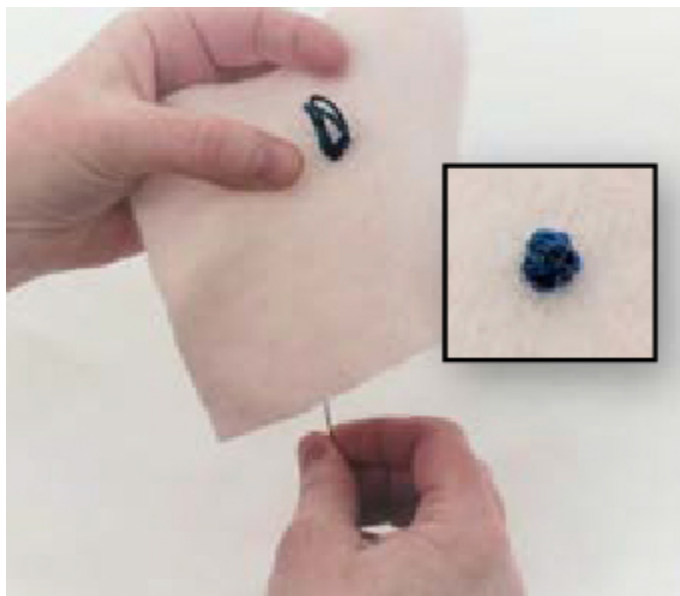
5. Press your finger on top of where the final knot will be created to hold everything tight as you pull the stitch.



6. Pull up carefully and slowly to ensure that the knot is created against the surface of the fabric.



7. Poke the needle down through the front of the fabric close to the knot.



8. Pull the thread through, tie it off, and clip it to finish your French knot.

THE QUILLIE RUG

Practice Project:

MAGDALENA'S LOLLIPOP TREE

The quillie technique can be used to create full rugs, trivets, and home decorations, but it also works beautifully to add embellishments to rugs made with the other techniques. In this section, I'll walk you through a brief overview of quillie rugs and variations, then give you tips on materials and tools to use. I've also included a general step-by-step guide for creating quillies.

Use the traditional rug hooking technique on [here](#) and the pattern on [here](#) to create the base of the Magdalena's Lollipop Tree practice project, then follow the quillie step-by-step to create lollipop embellishments. Once you're comfortable with the technique, use it to create your own rug designs.

This cheerful piece was inspired by Magdalena Briner Eby, a pioneer in the world of rug making and folk art who was born in 1832 in Perry County, Pennsylvania. She featured animals and the natural world in her art and used berries from her backyard to dye wool salvaged from her brothers' Civil War uniforms and the hospital her sister worked in. Magdalena often created these iconic trees in her rugs, thought to be a Pennsylvania Dutch style of family tree. This early design always reminds me of the 1951 Burl Ives song "The Lollipop Tree," and the two concepts inspired this simple, whimsical design. Quillie rounds are perfect for creating lollipop-like blooms on this vintage tree.



Finished dimensions: 13" x 13" (33 x 33cm)

Tools and Materials

- Rug hook
- Sewing needle or doll needle
- Heavyweight or upholstery weight thread
- Working material (traditionally strips of wool, but any material you can pull through the backing to create loops)
- Scrap material, cut into strips (thinner material will work, but thicker material will allow you to work faster)
- Scissors
- A frame or hoop (to keep the backing taut)
- 17" x 17" (43.2 x 43.2cm) backing material
- Pattern on here, transferred to your backing material (see here)



Rug hooking teacher, Ellen Gould, is creating a filled base for an old antique tray with a whimsical grouping of small quillie rounds.

BACKGROUND

This charming, fast, and easy rug technique is related to the art of paper quilling, which involves manipulating thin strips of paper into filigree curls to form patterns and pictures. Quillie rugs, also known as standing rugs, work the same way—thin strips of wool are rolled into small, swirled rounds. Individual quillies can then be sewn together to create abstract rugs, drawer liners, decorative elements—they can be scattered sparsely to create interesting designs or tightly compacted to create a solid surface of swirls.

Once you roll or shape your quillies and tack them in place with a needle and thread, you can shave them down with the edge of a pair of scissors or a craft knife to make the lines neater. You can also create long fabric roll tubes and then chop them into smaller quillie pieces, just like chefs create and chop sushi rolls. This technique is a great way to use up small scraps—even things as narrow as leftover bias tape, old sweater cuffs, and shoelaces. If you can roll it, it can be used to make a quillie rug.

CHOOSING MATERIALS AND TOOLS

Thinner scrap materials will work for making quillies, but thicker material is better. Pieces of old sweaters and thick wool scraps will allow you to work much faster.

Quillies are secured by sewing them through the middle and knotting the thread at the end when done. I use a regular sewing needle to sew through my quillies. I usually sew through a few times, with the threads running through the center like the spokes on a wagon wheel to make them more secure.

If you're creating really thick, large quillies or want to link a few smaller quillies together at one time, you'll need to use a doll needle, which is a 5" (12.7cm) flexible needle.

Quillie rugs also require heavyweight or upholstery weight thread, basically something strong enough to hold the quillies in their rolled shape. If you only have regular sewing thread on hand, be sure to add extra stitches when securing your rolls.

Quillie Variations

Standard quillies look like tiny cinnamon rolls, but the techniques employed can be used to create a variety of different design elements, which can be used to add interest to pictorial and abstract rugs. You can also collect many different quillies and sew them together to create a rug that's entirely quillie-based. It's a bit more advanced, but you can even use compressed quillies to fill in parts of your rug to create images. You simply manipulate the round or accordion quillies into the shape you need to fill the desired space and sew them together.



You can use standard quillie rolls to create ornaments on a tree, curls on a sheep, or abstract stars in a night sky. You can also piece them together using a doll's needle to make a rug entirely out of quillie rounds.



You can also accordion your fabric strips on a doll's needle and secure it with a knot to create a quilled ribbon candy effect. This is called "shirring."



This quillie rug by Annette Shaffer was made in the shirred style with a single traditional quillie roll in the center and shirred accordions of fabric forming the surrounding body of the rug.



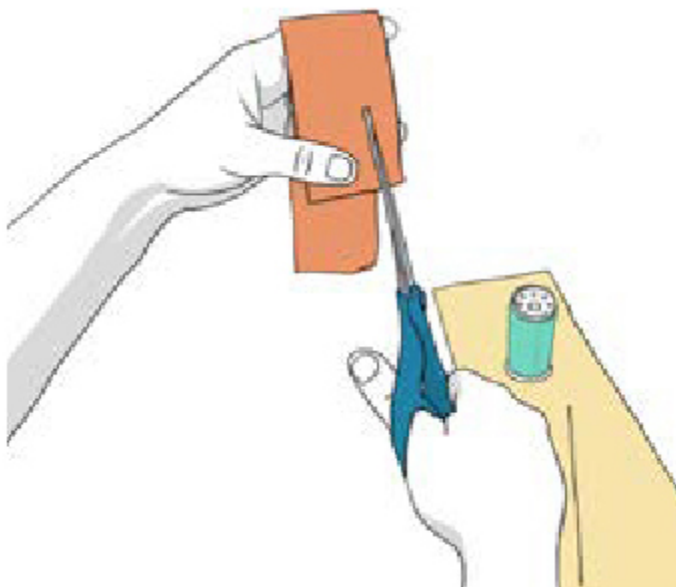
This quillie masterpiece by Ellen Gould shows how finished quillie rugs can grow organically into a borderless shape.



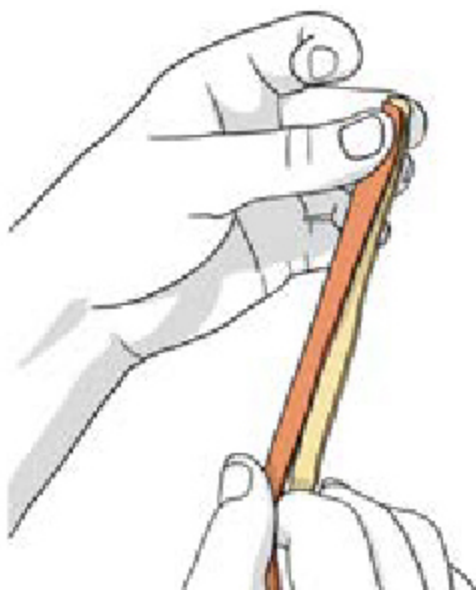
Ellen Gould filled in the base of this drawer with a symmetrical composition of squared quillies.

HOW TO QUILLIE

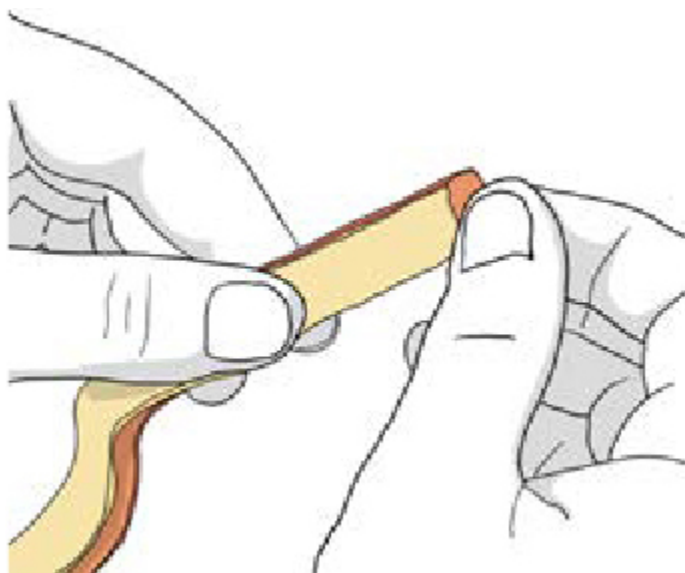


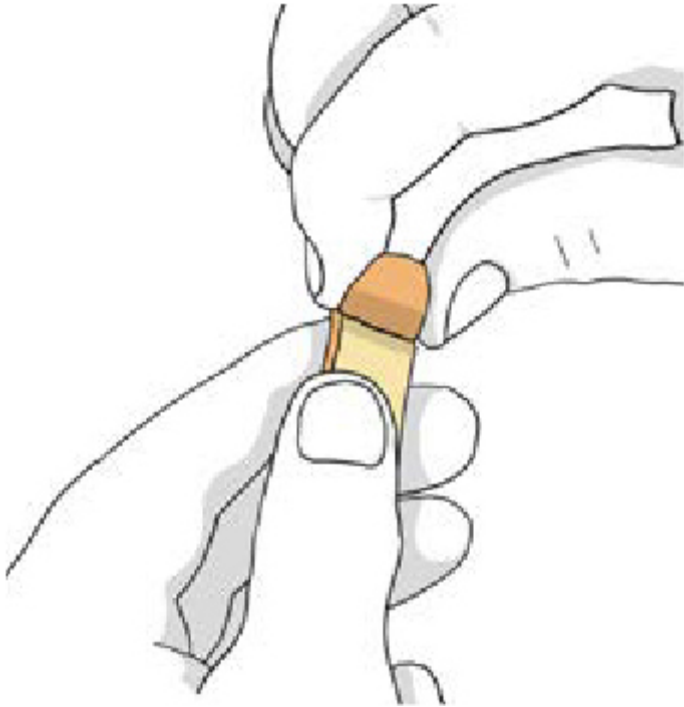


1. Cut or rip your fabrics into strips. **Note:** If ripping the strips, make them wide enough to avoid any fraying.



2. Layer as few or as many strips as you want to roll.

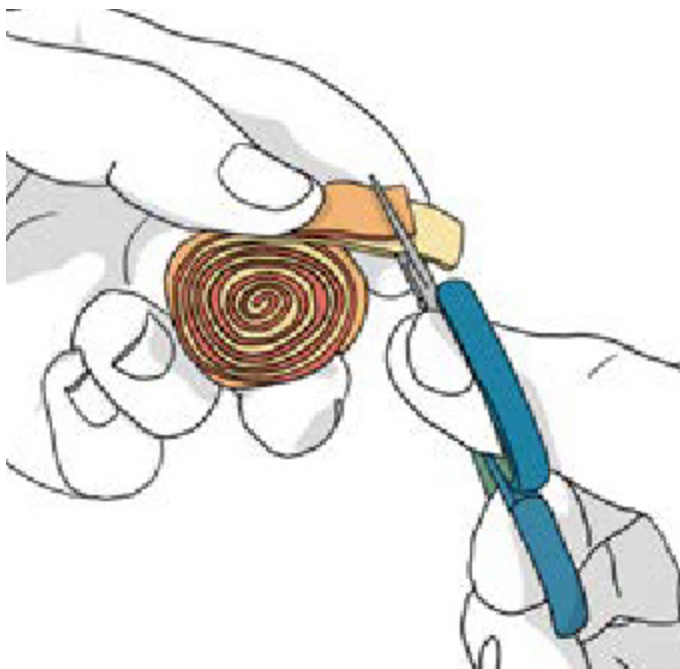




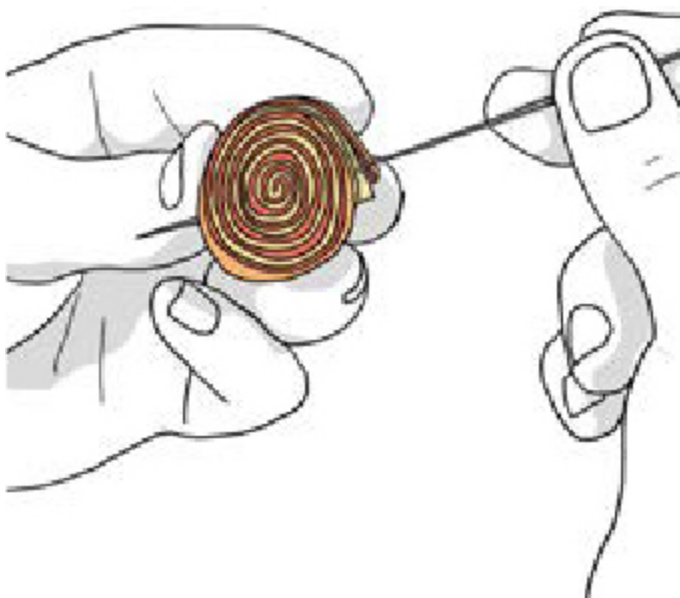
3. Fold the strips over at one end and start to tightly roll them into a spiral.



4. Roll the strips up until you're happy with the size of your pinwheel.

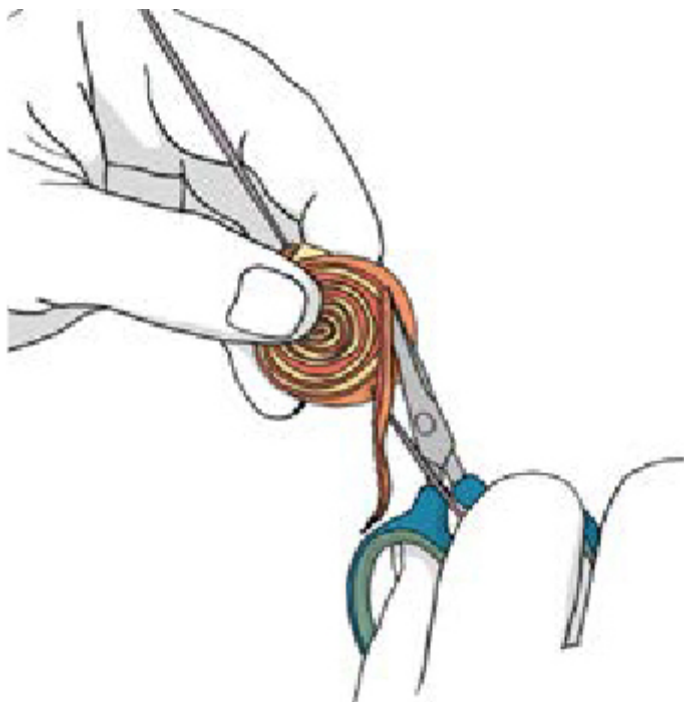


5. Clip the ends of the fabric strips.

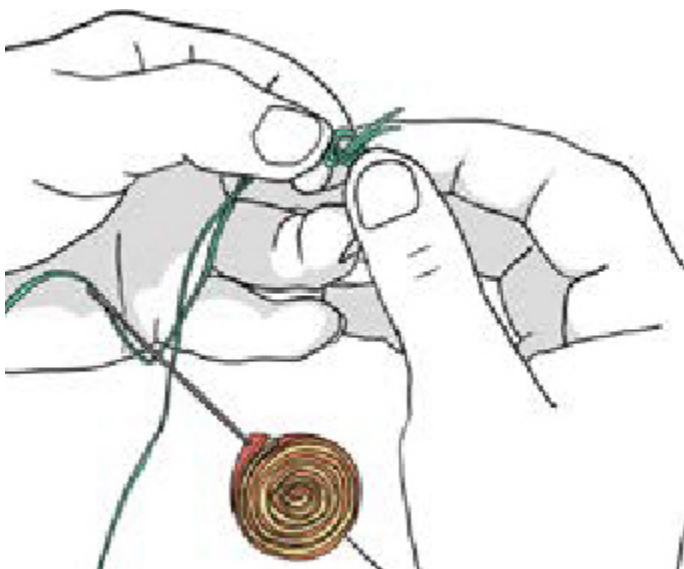


6. Poke your needle through the roll, starting at the ends of the fabric

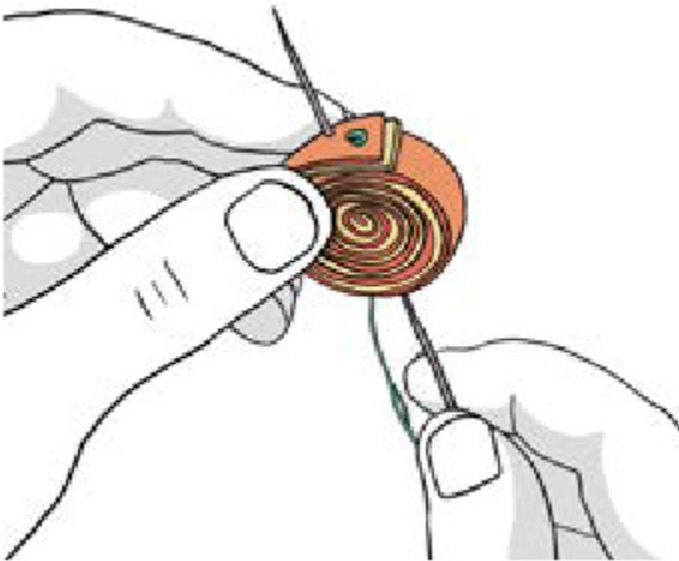
strips, to hold everything together.



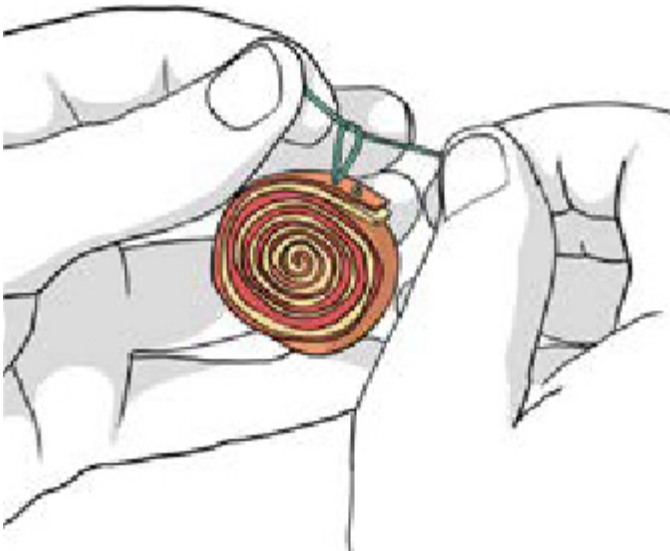
7. Trim the flat surface area if you want to create a crisp spiral.



8. Thread the needle, tying a knot at the end of the thread. Pull it through the quillie so the knot secures the end of the rolled-up strips in place.



9. Run the needle and thread through the quillie at least one more time.



10. Once you're finished, clip the thread off the needle and tie a final

knot to secure the finished roll.





I left spaces as I hooked the tree and background for this project so I'd have room to attach the quillies to the tree.

TRADITIONAL PUNCH NEEDLE

Practice Project:

TEACUP MANSION

In this section, I'll walk you through a brief history of traditional punch needle and provide tips to make your punch needle experience go smoothly. I've also included a general step-by-step guide for the traditional punch needle technique. Follow the technique step-by-step with the pattern on here and similar materials to create the Teacup Mansion practice project. Once you're comfortable with the technique, use it to create your own rug designs.

I wanted to create a fun composition for punch needle that had some humor and the feel of an early sampler. I struck on the idea of the house in a teacup and decided to surround it with a flat, primitive landscape. I decided to work with the unexpected neon palette of a 1980s candy aisle. Folk art is my favorite genre because the oversized animals and objects and the playful proportions and colors easily create an impactful image!



Finished dimensions: 17" x 17" (43.2 x 43.2cm)



These are the colors I originally set aside for this project. I ended up using most of them, but I did make changes as the project evolved. For example, I ended up leaving out some of the variegated yarns to avoid having too many confusing textures in the finished piece.

Tools and Materials

- Traditional punch needle
- Yarn
- Scissors
- 21" × 21" (53.3 × 53.3cm) backing material
- Hoop (to keep the backing taut)
- Pattern on here, transferred to your backing material (see here)

BACKGROUND

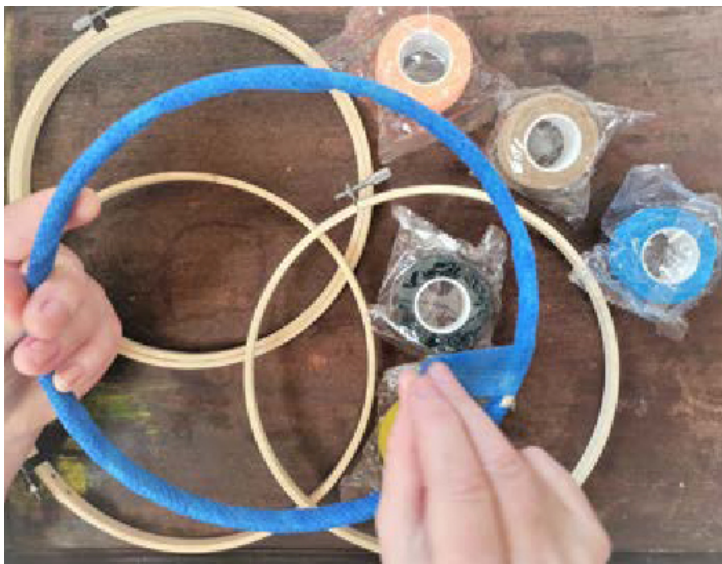
Punch needle is a speedier offshoot of traditional rug hooking that has one very notable difference—rug hooking involves pulling material up through the backing cloth with a hooked tool while punch needle involves pushing material down through the back of the backing cloth. You're always working the reverse side of the piece so you must reverse any patterns before transferring them to the backing fabric. You also have to turn your work over to check your progress and see how your loops look. The loops produced with a punch needle look very similar to the loops produced in traditional rug hooking.

Rug historian William Winthrop Kent wrote that punch needle was born in nineteenth century England in the height of the British Industrial Revolution, when expensive, machine-made carpets were in vogue among the upper classes. Workers at the rug factories were permitted to keep thrums, the 9" (22.9cm) scraps of waste wool used to attach a weaving to the loom. With enough thrums and easy-to-source sack backings, these workers could make their own rugs. Other researchers list punch needle as being a purely North American invention, however, so it's tough to pin down the true beginnings.

SHOULD YOU PUNCH IN A CERTAIN ORDER?

Is there a right order to punch in? Should you start with the border, or the center? This isn't a craft (like needlepoint) where it makes any difference to the look of the finished product if it's not done in a certain order. I personally find it easiest to outline first. Some people punch top to bottom, or in circles and rounds, and those techniques

will create lovely directional movement. There is no right order, so do what feels best for you.



If you are using a hoop and your fabric isn't taut enough, wrap just the smaller inner hoop with self-adhesive medical gauze or bandages. Wrapping just this inner hoop will make for a tighter hold on the fabric as you punch.



Even if I'm not using graphic outlining as part of the design, I outline whatever shape I'm working on and then fill it in.

WHAT KIND OF FRAME DO I NEED TO PUNCH?

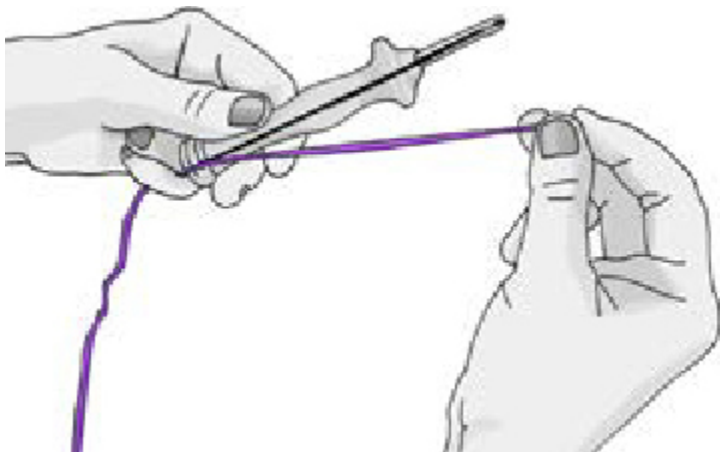
Some people prefer embroidery hoops or lap hoops while others prefer frames with carpet tacks. With punch needle more than any other rug-making technique, your backing fabric needs to be held as taut as possible. Sometimes a hoop won't pull the material tight enough for you to be able to work fast or effectively. Tight backing fabric is the key to punch needle success.

SHOULD I PUNCH EVERY HOLE?

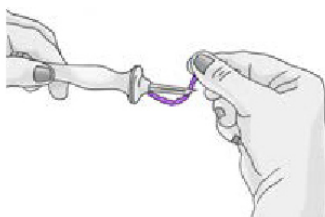
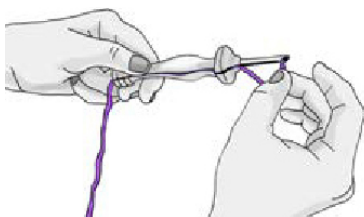
Unlike the other techniques, in punch needle you don't necessarily want to work into every single hole. Instead, you need to "feel" when your loops are getting too crowded or too far apart. This feel for the spacing takes a little bit of practice. If you pack your loops too close together, your piece will start to bulge and buckle. Alternatively, you'll notice gaps if the loops are too far apart.

Thicker yarns will be impossible to punch into every hole, while you might need to work thinner yarns into every hole. Practice with your backing and yarn to see how different groupings of loops look. If they look too spaced out or too crowded together, pull the loops out and try again. If they look "right," you're good to go!

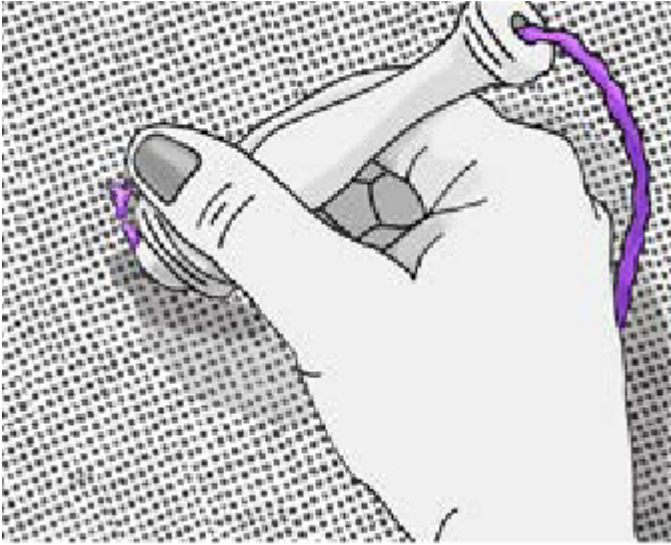
HOW TO PUNCH NEEDLE



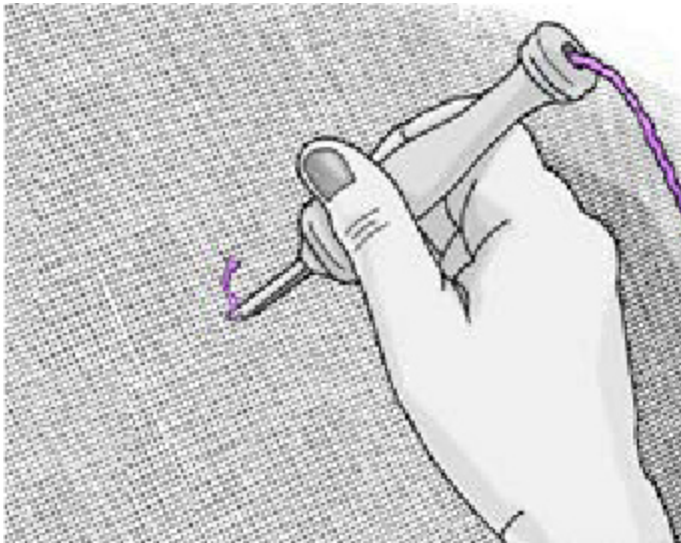
1. Thread the yarn from the bottom of the handle up through the channel toward the eye in the needle.



2. Thread the yarn through the eye of the needle.

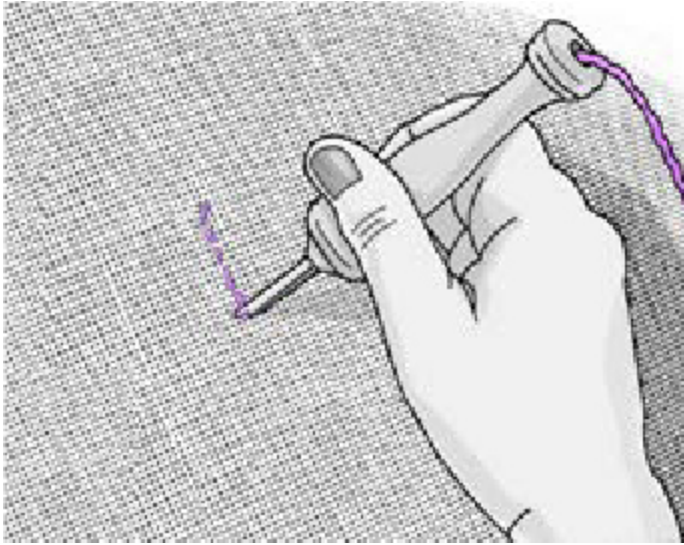


3. The underside of the backing fabric should be facing you. Punch the needle down into the backing fabric until the handle touches the fabric. **Note:** The yarn tail should stay on top of this underside of the backing fabric.

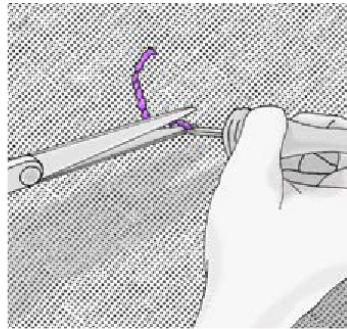
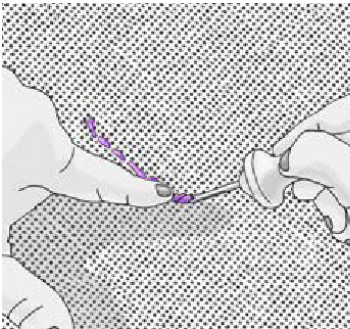


4. Pull the needle back out so just the tip is against the backing fabric. Do not lift up as that would cause the previous loop to come undone. Scrape the needle tip along the surface of the backing fabric to the next

punch location.

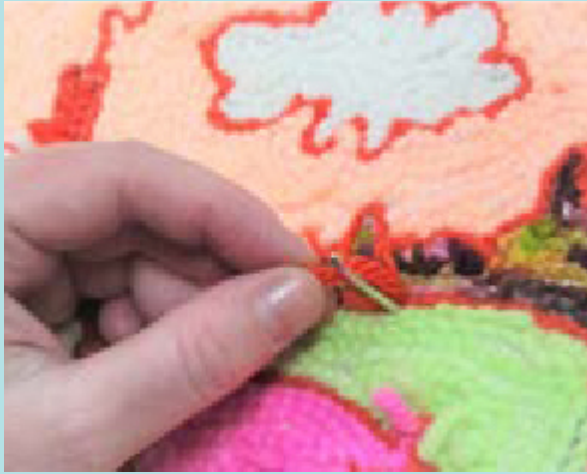


5. Continue the punch process until you fill the section you're working on. You can work in any direction to create outlines and patterns as desired.



6. Once you are ready to end the color, hold the yarn against the backing fabric and pull the needle up to reveal more of the yarn without pulling out the last loop. Snip the yarn tail to about 1" (2.5cm) and leave it sticking up.

Tip:



If the tails on the back annoy you, you can use a traditional rug hook to pull them through to the front. Then simply cut them even with the rest of the pile.

MINIATURE PUNCH NEEDLE

Practice Project:

THE TRAIL OF THE PATCHWORK PONIES

In this section, I'll walk you through a brief overview of the miniature punch needle technique and explore the backing and thread elements to consider. I've also included a general step-by-step guide for the miniature punch needle technique, as well as troubleshooting tips. Follow the technique step-by-step with the pattern on here to create the Trail of Patchwork Ponies practice project. Once you're comfortable with the technique, use it to create your own rug designs.

With this piece I wanted to pay tribute to the painted horses of Granby, Connecticut. My mom lives in Granby, and years ago they commissioned artists to paint life-sized statues of horses for an auction. After the auction, the painted horses were featured all over the town—one outside the bank, another on the library lawn, one in front of the yarn shop. My kids and I love spotting them!



Finished dimensions: 13" x 7" (33 x 17.8cm)

Tools and Materials

- Miniature punch needle
- Thread or floss
- Threader
- Scissors
- 17" x 11" (43.2 x 27.9cm) backing material (weaver's cloth is ideal)
- Hoop (to keep the backing taut)
- Pattern on [here](#), transferred to your backing material ([see here](#))



One of the best things about miniature punch needle is that it can convey the same aura of antiquity and delicate charm that other traditional rag rug techniques have. Miniature punch needle pieces, like this masterpiece by Ann Owen, have a feeling of character and age.

BACKGROUND

Miniature punch needle is just what it sounds like—a tiny version of traditional punch needle. It uses a miniature punch needle and thinner threads, but the overall process is the same. Like traditional punch needle, miniature punch needle is worked in reverse and produces well-articulated loops. Every punch into the underside of the backing fabric creates a tiny loop on the front side. The loops create the pile, which forms the basis of the designs. Because the tool and the resulting loops are so tiny, you can achieve great detail—from a small

glint of light or hint of shadow to single specks of color. Depending on the thread or floss used (acrylic, cotton, or linen), the finished pile ranges from wiry and rough to plush and velvety.

While traditional punch needle evolved in the nineteenth century, miniature punch needle is much, much older. Some researchers link it back to fifteenth century ecclesiastical vestments, while other historians believe it has roots in ancient Egypt. What we know for sure is that some seventeenth century tapestries and hangings appear to have been created with a punching tool. No matter where miniature punch needle originated, evidence of its use over hundreds of years has been found across many continents, both in clothing and textile decoration.

In the late twentieth century, miniature punch needle was popular with Eastern Orthodox Christians, who wore traditional Russian garments decorated with miniature punch needle embellishments. This led to an alternative name for the technique—"Russian punch needle." In the Russian punch needle tradition, the needles used come in three sizes for working with one strand, three strands, or six strands at a time, and the process is called "Igolochkoy" (Russian for "with a needle").



These vintage Pretty Punch® yarns clearly indicate on the label that they are for punch embroidery.



Valdani hand-dyed threads are very popular. These are vintage finds, but they can be purchased new, as well.



DMC embroidery floss is a favorite of many makers. I find many of my floss bundles in thrift stores, but these are available in craft stores, as well.

CHOOSING THREADS

Some popular materials for miniature punch needle projects include spools of thin cotton yarn. You may not be able to source these from reclaiming an old sweater or tearing up a bed sheet, but you can buy them new and you can often find them in antique and thrift stores—the ones shown on these pages are all vintage spools I rescued! Miniature punch has a specific look, the charm of which is based on its small scale and tiny, delicate loops. Only threads, flosses, and very thin yarns will work.



These sock- and lace-weight yarns look very thin and fine, but they are probably too thick for use with a miniature punch needle. They are best used with a traditional punch needle.

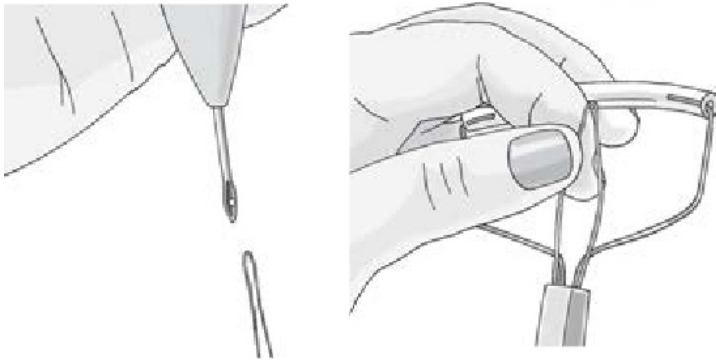
CHOOSING BACKING FABRIC

Miniature punch needle is usually worked on weaver's cloth because it's both fine and stretchy. Miniature punch needle is best worked on tightly woven backings since you need to be able to punch into it but also create a loop that's permanently held in place by the fabric closing in and hugging it. That's why stretchiness is so important—the

insertion of the punch needle opens a space for the loop to pop through, then the fabric automatically closes behind the needle.

Weaver's cloth is the preferred backing for this reason, but it's not the only choice. As with all rug crafts, whether you are holding a needle, a punch, a hook, or any other tool—if you find a backing fabric that works (holds your loops or stitches), use it! Many people also punch into denim, twills, stretchy cottons, and many other fabrics.

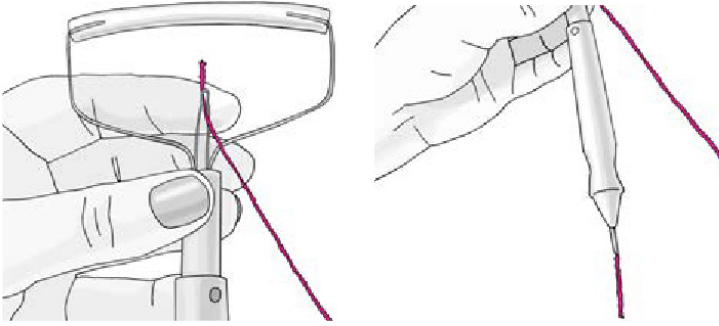
HOW TO MINIATURE PUNCH NEEDLE



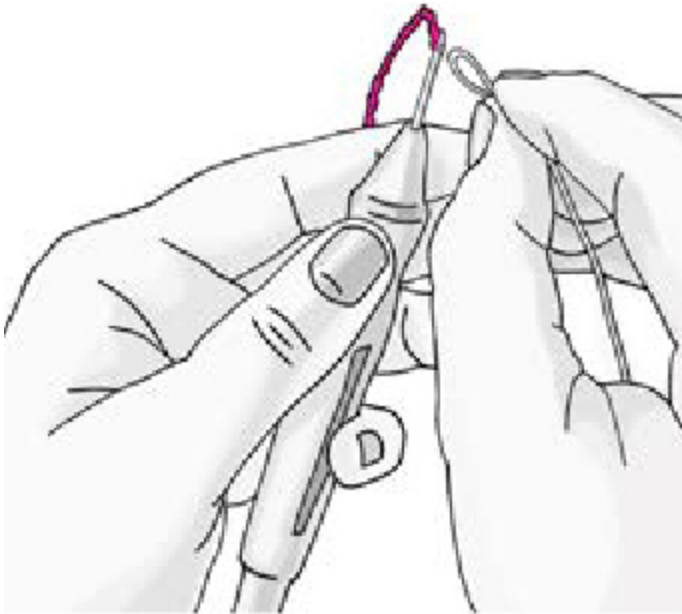
1. Poke the threader down through the needle channel until it emerges from the end. **Note:** my miniature punch needle has a horizontal holder for securing working spools of floss at the end, but many do not have this feature.

Tip:

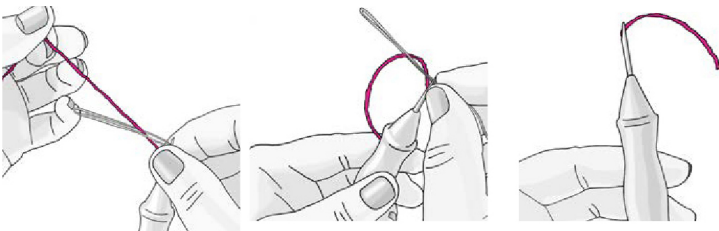
You will need to use a threader to thread your miniature punch needle. Since the threader must fit all the way up through the needle shaft and handle, I use inexpensive threaders that are at least 8" (20.3cm) long.



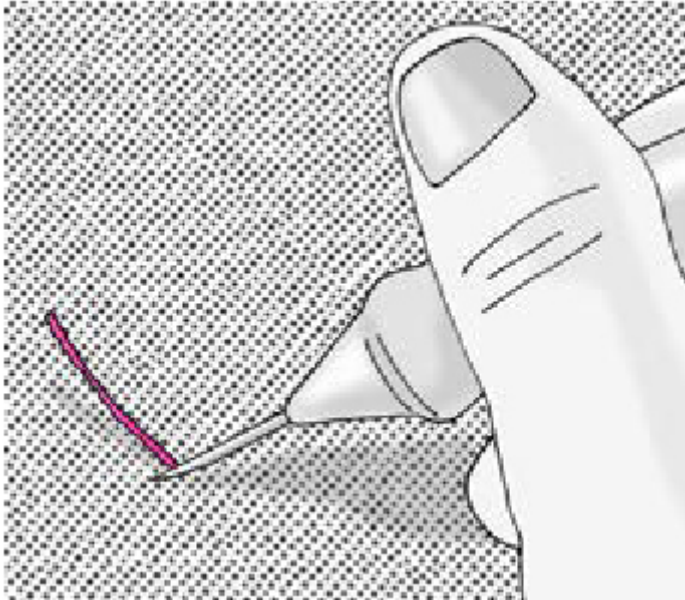
2. Run your floss or yarn through the threader, then pull the threader back down and out through the top of the needle.



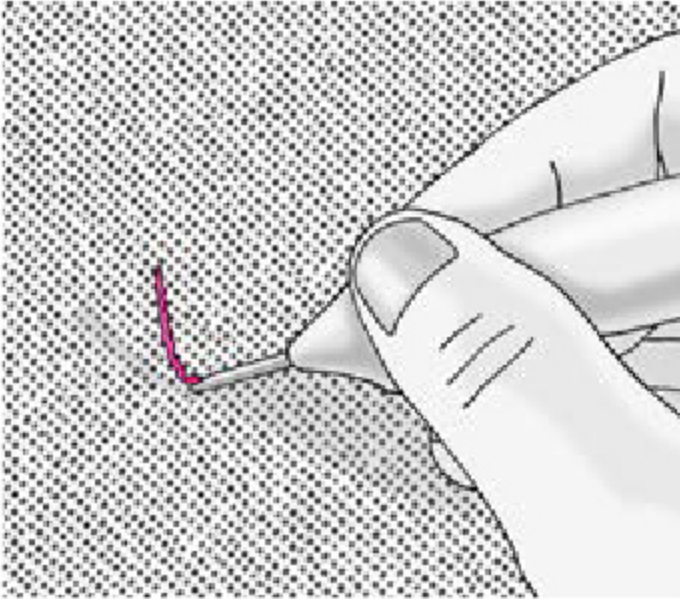
3. Poke the threader through the eye of the needle from the front side to the back side.



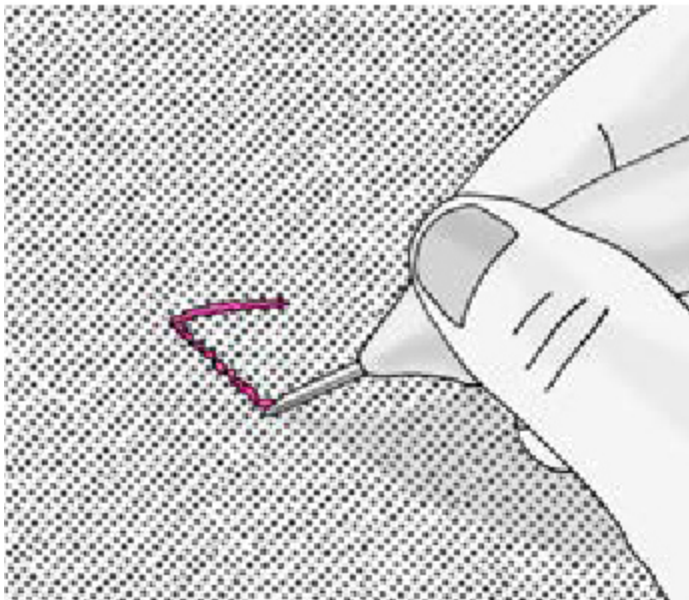
4. Run your floss or yarn up through the threader and pull it back through the eye of the needle.



5. The underside of the backing fabric should be facing you. Punch the needle down into the backing fabric until the handle touches the fabric.
Note: The floss or yarn tail should stay on top of this underside of the backing fabric.



6. Pull the needle back out so just the tip is against the backing fabric. Do not lift up as that would cause the previous loop to come undone. Scrape the needle tip along the surface of the backing fabric to the next punch location. **Note:** Your stitches should be very close together—gaps should only be as wide as the metal needle shaft.



7. Continue the punch process until you fill the section you're working on. Don't worry about direction—the loops are too small to create directional flow.

8. Once you are ready to end the color, hold the floss or yarn against the backing fabric and pull the needle up to reveal more of the floss or yarn without pulling out the last loop. Snip the tail to about 1" (2.5cm) and leave it sticking up.

WHAT AM I DOING WRONG?

If you're having trouble with the miniature punch needle technique, it's probably caused by one of the following common mistakes:

- **Your working floss or yarn is getting caught on something while you're punching.** If the floss or yarn catches on your sleeve, the table, your teacup, etc., it will pull out your loops. The floss or yarn needs to flow freely.
- **Your floss or yarn is too thick for your needle.** You must also avoid snags within the needle itself. If your material is even slightly too thick, it will pull out your loops.

- **Your backing fabric doesn't have the right balance of fine weave and stretchiness.** Weaver's cloth is the go-to backing for miniature punch needle, but you can use other materials. Some materials just don't work, however, because the weave and stretchiness isn't balanced enough to work with the technique.

- **You are lifting your needle up too high in between loops.** Be sure to scrape across the surface of the backing without lifting the needle. If you lift the needle, it will pull out your loops.

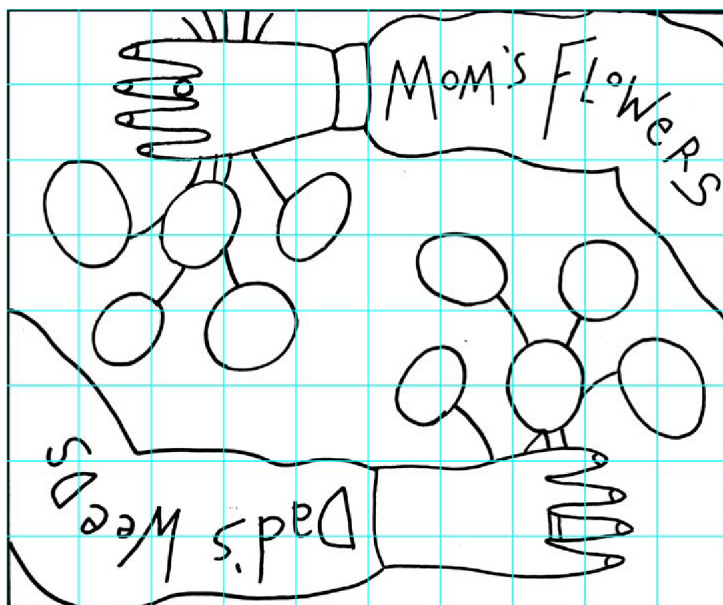
- **You might have threaded only the needle shaft or only the eye of the needle.** Remember that threading is a two-part process in miniature punch needle.

- **Your floss or yarn might have broken inside the punch needle.** Very rarely, thread might rip inside the punch needle and create an obstruction. Run a threader up and down inside the needle shaft to try to pull out any loose thread pieces. If you are still having trouble, take the needle apart to clean it.

Patterns

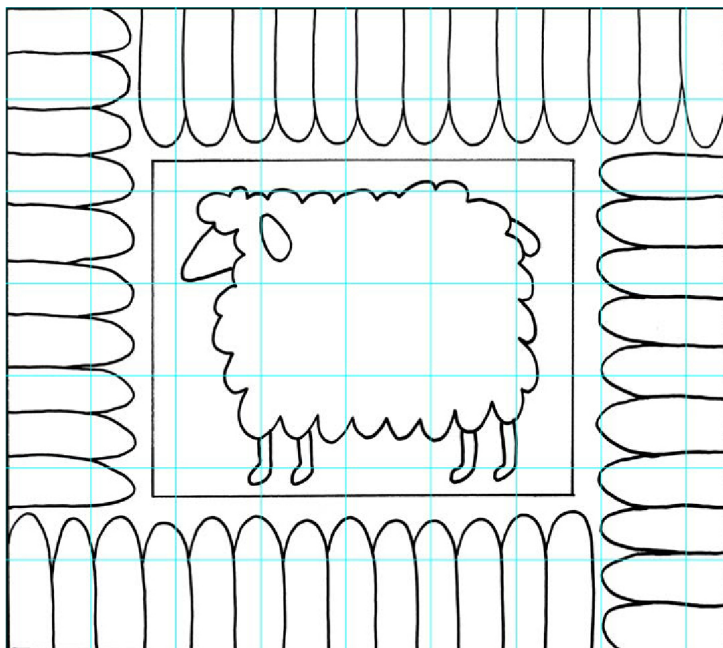


View from Digby, here
Copy at 300%



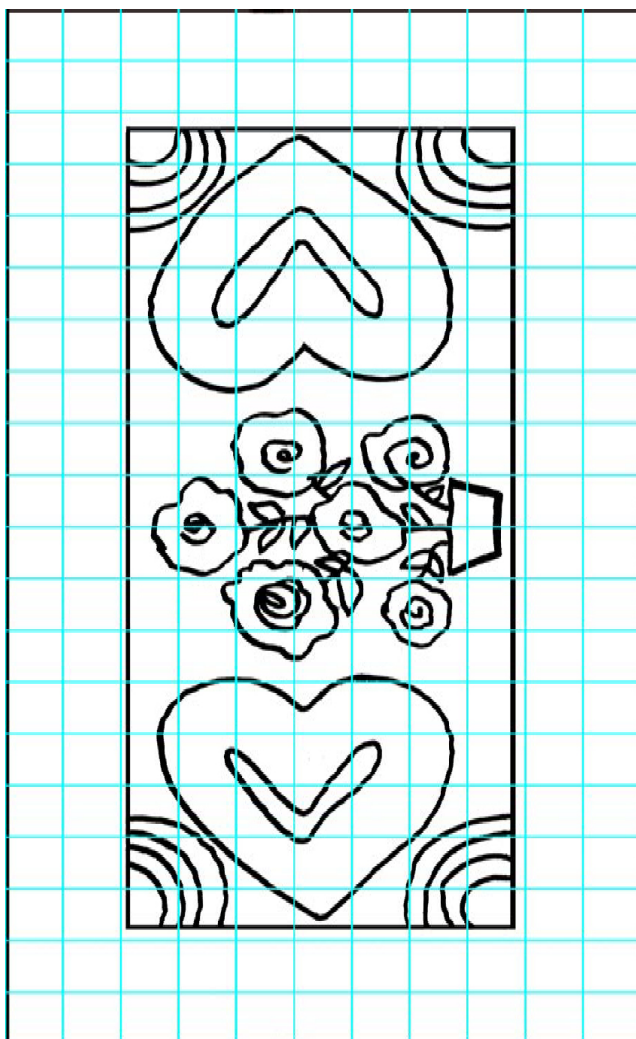
Mom's Flowers, Dad's Weeds, here

Copy at 250%



Lamb's Tongue Sampler, here

Copy at 250%



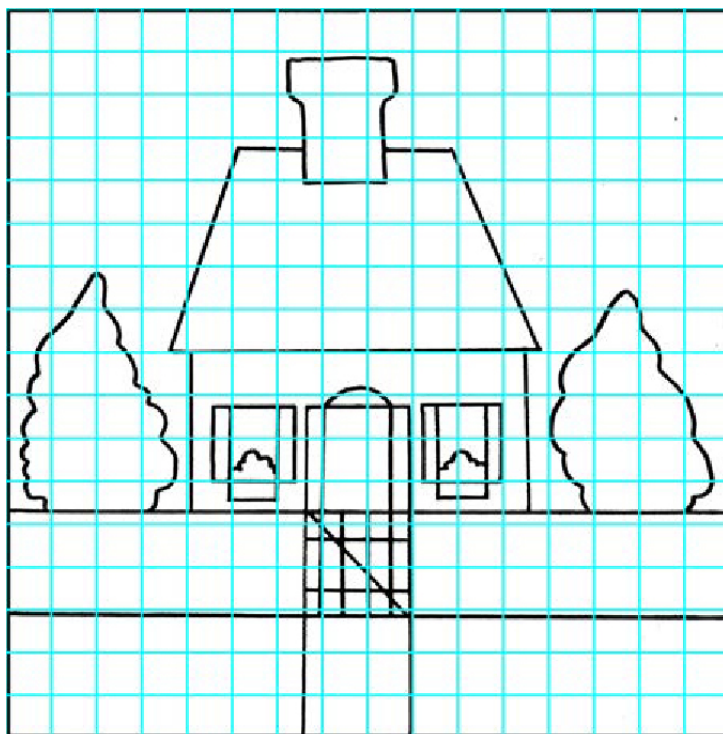
Valentine Bouquet, page 124

Copy at 250%

Patterns **163**

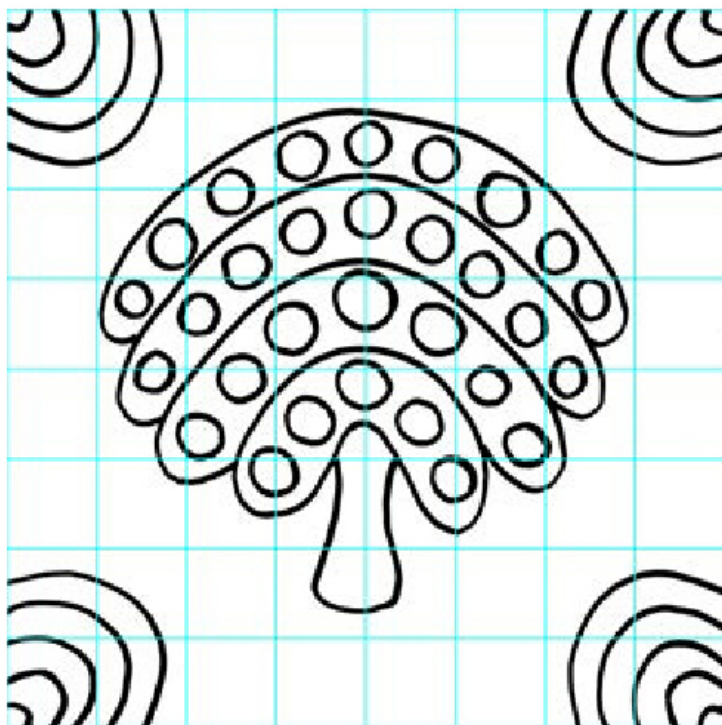
Valentine Bouquet, here

Copy at 250%



Matchbox Mansion, here

Copy at 400%

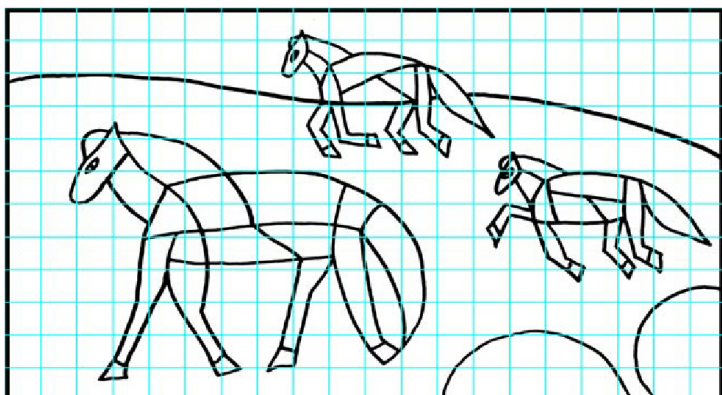


Magdalena's Lollipop Tree, here
Copy at 400%



Teacup Mansion, here

Copy at 400%



The Trail of the Patchwork Ponies, here
Copy at 200%

About the Author



Deana David is the founder of Ribbon Candy Hooking, a rug-hooking brand she created as a New Year's resolution in January 2020. The brand's success is a testament to the abounding renaissance in handcrafts and fiber arts all around the world. Whimsical patterns with a seasonal and often historical spirit have become the brand's hallmark; just as surely as experimentation and inspiration are the brand's buzzwords. Deana records hundreds of instructional videos a year from her Connecticut studio and hosts live shows, hook-a-longs, and unique rug-making events that foster camaraderie and connections among new rugging friends all over the world.

Dedication



This book is dedicated to my sister, Jessica, who has not only done all the excellent illustrations in this book but has also done the job of being the best sister ever—for all my life. Our travels, holidays, adventures, and shared memories are the brilliant backdrop to my life and all my work.

“Rug making is alchemy where the memories stored in cloth are transformed into something usable and beautiful to shelter memories. This book is a lovely guide to get you started while making memories along the way.”

—Kelly Kellie, weaver, rag rug maker, and owner of
Quiet Storytellers

“Explore and enjoy an upcycle craft that has been around for 250+ years in this entertaining and educational text from Deana David.”

—Wave & Perri McFarland, owners of The Woolery

“*Easy, Beautiful Handmade Rag Rugs* is a delightful guide to the beautiful craft of rag rug making. It is chock-full of colorful photos, which will have you itching to get started.”

—Elspeth Jackson, author of *Rag Rug Techniques for Beginners* and expert/owner of Ragged Life

“Deana David’s clear, comprehensive instructions and diagrams for a wide variety of rug-making techniques will inspire and guide you on your rug-making journey.”

—Laurie Lausen, rug artist at The Wooly Red Rug

REUSE AND RECYCLE TO CREATE BEAUTIFUL ECO- FRIENDLY RUGS AND MORE!



Do you have a closet full of clothes that you no longer wear? Do you have a pile of scrap fabric from previous crafts lying in a corner? In a throw-away world, you can learn to make those old garments and fabric into a one-of-a-kind handmade rag rug. *Easy, Beautiful Handmade Rag Rugs* is an approachable and fun guide for crafters of all ages to learn how to make rag rugs. The book begins with a beautiful gallery of rag rugs made by leading fabric artists from around the world. They share their inspiration and projects using the classic techniques described in the book. This book also provides you with step-by-step instruction on how to make beautiful rag rug crafts from start to finish with projects included so you can practice each technique. Start creating your very own sustainable, eco-friendly handmade floor rugs, pillows, and wall hangings now!



This book includes information on:

- 12 techniques and projects for different types of rugs
- Materials: ready-made, recycled, and nontraditional, as well as rug backing
- The tools you will need
- Designing, sizing, and transferring your own pattern
- Choosing a color palette and dyeing fabric

- Copyable patterns for the practice projects